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Scientific Breakthroughs and Evolving Practices in Modern Healthcare and Medical Sciences

Jamilah Saleh Alghazwani[1], Saud Safar Mohammed Alshahrani[2], Mohammed Ali Ageeli[3], Ali Abdu Gharawi[4], Ali Muodiysh Abdullah Matri[5], Alanoud Ali Bin Ali[6], Amirah Ahmed Hassan Shubayli[7], Ohoud Hassan Alhazmi[8], ABDULRAHMAN SAEED MOHAMMED ALQHTANI[9], MOHAMMED ZAYED MOHAMMED ASIRI[10], Sara Hassan Alami Hakami[11], Nada Mohammed Mousa Ageeli[12], Jaber Abushamlah Mousa Maasai[13], Rana Mansuor Moharg[14], Ali Awaji Mohammed Humedi[15]

Affiliate to Armed Forces Hospital in Jazan Mininstry of Defense Health Services, Jazan, Saudi Arabia, and Armed Forces Hospital Southern Region (AFHSR)

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Introduction

There have been significant changes in medical and health sciences as a result of advances in medical and health sciences research, growth in diagnostic techniques, shift in approaches to healthcare treatment and organisation. Genetic investigations can help detect inherited diseases and choose appropriate treatment; high-tech imaging can detect disease in earlier stages; digital systems can assist with clinical decision making; and new drugs can be developed that have a more specific action on biological mechanisms. These advancements are altering the perceptions of health care professionals regarding illness, prevention of complications, and recovery. They also develop opportunities for quality, safety and efficiency improvements in health care in various settings.

Modern medicine would not have advanced beyond the status quo without many inventions. It is a reflection of scientific research, technological innovation, clinical experience, public health programmes, and collaboration amongst health professionals. Biomedical research delivers information on the disease etiology and mechanisms and clinical studies tell us about the efficacy and safety of novel interventions. With the help of advances in information technology, healthcare institutions can now quickly process vast amounts of health information, coordinate the provision of services and track patients outside the hospital. Meanwhile, shifts in population health such as an aging population, chronic disease, new infections and environmental factors are also influencing research priorities. Modern health care needs, therefore, a scientific discovery and application to the needs of patients.

Recent advances have increased opportunities for diagnosis and treatment but not necessarily for everyone. New technologies can be costly, require facilities or trained personnel or rely on a consistent source of electricity or Internet. Ethical issues also arise in the use of genetic data, AI or large database by healthcare. Health equity, therefore, must be a core measure of scientific progress, as well as what it can achieve. This paper explores some of the key developments in medical sciences and health sciences, the impact of these advances in clinical practice and healthcare delivery and what needs to be done to ensure that innovation can bring tangible, positive and lasting change.

Scientific Advances in Diagnosis, Precision Medicine, and Disease Understanding

A fundamental, and possibly the most fundamental, shift in modern medicine has been from the detection of disease primarily through its recognizable symptoms to the detection of changes in the biology of the disease that may occur prior to the development of severe symptoms. While the traditional diagnostic tools are still very important, advances in molecular biology, laboratory science, imaging and data analysis have led to earlier and more precise diagnosis of disease. An early diagnosis can enable

treatment to be started before significant tissue damage has taken place, minimize complications, and enhance the chance for successful treatment. Some of the benefits of these advances are evident in cancer, cardiovascular diseases, neurological diseases, inherited diseases and infectious diseases.

The molecular diagnosis has been reinforced for disease diagnosis based on the study of genetic material, proteins and other biological markers. Specific pathogens and gene variations can be increasingly detected by polymerase chain reaction testing, gene sequencing, and other lab technologies. In outbreaks of infectious diseases, molecular testing can be used to help determine what is causing the disease and to help implement the necessary infection control measures. In oncology, the analysis of the tumour DNA can show mutations that can affect the behavior of the tumor and the treatment that can be effective. A new development that's opening up additional options for monitoring cancer and treatment resistance changes is the growing use of liquid biopsy, which involves the study of tumor related material present in the blood. These methods alone do not diagnose or substitute for physician evaluation, but do give supplemental information that can help to clarify the diagnosis and treatment plan.

Genomics has helped to develop a more personalized knowledge of disease. Apparent similar conditions may present different symptoms or signs and a similar diagnosis may result from different biological mechanisms; and patients who have apparently similar conditions may react differently to the same medicine. Genetic testing can give information about inherited risk, aid in the diagnosis of rare diseases, and help guide management of certain rare patients with specific treatment. Pharmacogenomics is the study of the different ways in which genetic variations can affect drug metabolism, drug efficacy and the potential for side effects. It could be useful in clinical use to minimize unnecessary drug issues and to select or dose some drugs. But a person's age, medical history, other medicines, lifestyle and environmental factors must also be taken into account before interpreting a person's genetic information. The results of a genetic test are not always a perfect predictor of an individual's health in the future.

Genetic testing is not the only aspect of precision medicine. It includes a combination of molecular information and clinical

features, environmental exposures, and sometimes lifestyle information to inform prevention and treatment. Targeted medicines could be used, for instance, in cancer treatment, depending on certain molecular characteristics of a tumour—not just the organ where the cancer initially formed. The use of immunotherapy has also revolutionized the treatment of some cancers, allowing patients' immune systems to identify and eliminate cancer cells. AACR (2025) proclaims ongoing advancements across the cancer care continuum in targeted therapy, immunotherapy, surgery, radiotherapy and more. These advances illustrate the power of knowledge of tumor biology to shape treatment choices, and to enable more personalized care.

Significant advances have been made in imaging technologies as well. Neuro-imaging techniques, such as MRI, computed tomography (CT scan), ultrasound and positron emission tomography (PET scan), allow for detailed information about structure and function within the body. Advances in image resolution, contrast agents, and computer-assisted interpretation will aid in the detection of abnormalities, treatment planning, and treatment monitoring. Digital pathology is transforming the process of examining tissue samples with the ability to scan, store and view tissue slides digitally. This can help facilitate "consultation" between specialists and provide opportunities for computer-assisted analysis. Imaging findings, however, should be related to the patient's symptoms and history. Technically advanced scans do not always result in accurate diagnosis, and unnecessary tests can result in an exposure of costs, anxiety, or even unnecessary tests.

AI is now showing to be a promising option for analysing medical images, lab results, clinical notes and trends in large data sets. There are some systems which can aid in the identification of abnormal radiographic features, assist in the classification of a skin lesion, or prioritise cases which need an urgent review. Predictive models can also help to identify patients who are at higher risk of deterioration, hospitalization, or complications. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to bolster health services, including in settings with limited human and resource capacity, while ensuring safety, accountability, and equitable governance, as highlighted by the World Health Organization (2024). AI should be used to assist, not supplant, professional judgement. The accuracy of systems is dependent upon the quality of the data they are trained on, but this data is not always complete or

representative, and the clinician should always verify the appropriateness of the recommendations for their patient.

Therapeutic Breakthroughs and the Changing Practice of Patient Care

As treatment has improved, the management of conditions that previously had limited treatment options, long-term disability or poor survival outcomes have changed. Pharmaceutical research has resulted in drugs targeting more specific mechanisms, better formulations and drugs with new mechanisms of action. Care for a selected group of cancers, autoimmune diseases, inflammatory diseases and other complex diseases has been extended with biological therapies, monoclonal antibodies and immune-based therapies. Some newer treatments will directly target one pathway associated with the disease instead of impacting multiple biological processes. This specificity might work for the right patients and have better efficacy, but there are still potential treatment effects and side effects to monitor.

These developments have had an impact on cancer treatment. Traditional surgery, chemotherapy and radiation are widely used, but are increasingly used in conjunction with targeted drugs, immunotherapy and molecular testing. Expertly designed drugs that target specific changes that support the growth and survival of cancer cells. Immunotherapies like immune checkpoint inhibitors and engineered cellular therapies have the potential to enhance or alter immune responses to the cancer cells. During the review period that the American Association for Cancer Research (2025) has investigated, there are ongoing regulatory advances in new cancer therapeutics and increased indications for existing drugs. Although these advances have brought greater choices for some patients, it does not imply that any one treatment is appropriate for all cancer patients. The decision will take into account the type of tumour, stage, molecular characteristics, previous treatments, health and preferences of the patient.

Another significant breakthrough is gene and cell therapies. The aim of gene therapy is to treat disease by inserting, replacing or altering the genes in living cells, whereas cell-based therapies are based on the use of living cells to restore or improve biological function. Casgevy and Lyfgenia were approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in December 2023 for eligible patients with sickle cell disease. Casgevy is the first CRISPR/Cas9 genome-editing technology-based drug to be FDA-

approved (U.S. Food and Drug Administration [FDA], 2023). The treatment strategy is to genetically alter a patient's blood-forming stem cells to cause the stem cells to produce more fetal haemoglobin, which means that the red blood cells are less likely to sickle. This milestone signifies the ability of genetic science to provide options for treating inherited disease at the level of its root cause, beyond just symptoms.

As promising as they are, gene and cell therapies are complex processes and require a lot of responsibility. Specialized preparation, conditioning, collection, lab processing and prolonged follow-up may be necessary for patients. Complications of treatment, and potential harm, may include severe side effects, uncertain long-term effects, and ongoing monitoring needed. Manufacturing is technically challenging and treatment expenses can make many of these therapies inaccessible for Health Systems. The introduction of these, therefore, needs specialist centres, trained multidisciplinary teams, clear referral pathways and systems for tracking outcomes. Studies are needed to determine the durability, safety and effectiveness in various populations. When therapies are being sold as being potentially "curing", the considerations are particularly important since there's a need for realistic communication for informed consent and shared decision making.

The knowledge of vaccines has also changed. During the COVID-19 pandemic, messenger RNA technology has proven its ability to drive vaccine development and has been used in other disease areas to create vaccines. The FDA approved another platform application to preventive medicine in 2024 with approval of an mRNA vaccine against respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) for eligible older adults (FDA, 2024). Influenza, Cancer and Other diseases are also being studied with mRNA. The technology enables cells to express a specified protein that is capable of inducing an immune response, without the vaccine needing to be composed of the whole infectious organism. The flexibility could potentially reduce the time required for vaccine manufacturing in some instances, but key issues of safety, efficacy, vaccine quality, storage and public trust will continue to be important to its implementation.

Digital Transformation, Public Health, and the Future of Healthcare Delivery

The digital health revolution is transforming access, delivery, documentation and evaluation of healthcare. Health records that are stored electronically enable authorised health care workers to access patient

information, record care provided to patients, and exchange pertinent information between services. Interoperable systems and accurate information can minimize duplication, enhance continuity, and aid in safer clinical decision making when information is electronic. But, as the design can be poorly done, it might lead to greater administrative burden, alert fatigue or information buried in the system. Digital transformation is not that simple—it's about more than software purchases. It includes staff training, reorganisation of workflows, effective technical support, data security and patient and health professional engagement in the development of the system.

Telemedicine has given more options for consultation and follow-up, without having to bring each patient to a health care facility. Video consultations, telephone services, remote monitoring and secure messaging are all ways that can help individuals who live away from hospitals, who have mobility restrictions or who require ongoing monitoring of stable conditions. Some services, such as follow-up visits, talking about medication, mental health services, and certain chronic care services, may benefit from remote care. There are devices you can wear and monitors that can be installed in your home that can measure data like heart rate, blood pressure, blood sugar, oxygen saturation and physical activity. If clinically appropriate, read with trained staff, they can be useful in identifying change that needs intervention. However, there are cases when physical examination, urgent assessment, lab tests or procedures are required that remote services have limitations.

Data governance is now a core healthcare duty, driven by the rise of digital care. With the increasing digitalization of care, data governance is becoming a key responsibility in healthcare. Access to medical records carries a high level of personal information and is confidential and if misused it can have a detrimental effect on patient trust and well-being. Healthcare systems must have robust security measures, access controls, employee training, retention protocols, and data breach response plans in place. Patients must be aware of the collection, use and disclosure of their information. When artificial intelligence systems play a role in clinical decisions, there are further ethical issues of responsibility. The performance needs to be evaluated in various populations, limitations of the system explained and avenues for professional review offered to developers and healthcare organisations. WHO (2024) provides a call to action for ethical principles and suitable governance frameworks to be put in place for

the use of AI in health, not because of its availability.

Innovation is going at a fast pace and there are challenges of innovation that need to be handled with care. New diagnostic tests, medicines, devices and digital platforms need to be tested before they become a mainstream thing to do to ensure they are safe, effective, reliable and cost effective. The evidence obtained from clinical trials is important; it may not apply to all patients who will use an intervention after the trial. Therefore, post-market monitoring is required to detect rare adverse effects and to gather long-term data on the effects. Healthcare workers must also undergo lifelong learning to stay current with new evidence and to not use technologies that have yet to be shown to be clinically meaningful. Just because something is new in science, it doesn't necessarily translate to better care for patients.

Cost and inequitable access are still significant issues. Health systems in areas with high resources are likely to have access to newer medicines and technologies, and low-resource health systems could find themselves facing challenges of the staff and diagnostic resources, as well as the shortage of essential medicines and reliable infrastructure. According to the 2025 monitoring report by the WHO and World Bank, in 2023, 4.6 billion people did not access all essential health services and in 2022, 2.1 billion people faced financial difficulties due to OOP health expenses (WHO & World Bank, 2025). These statistics highlight the importance of medical progress, and the need to think about these in terms of the universal coverage. Without a treatment available or affordable there is no potential population benefit.

Conclusion

Advances in science and changing practices have transformed health care in the modern world, and increased knowledge about disease, more laboratory information, and new options for prevention and treatment. Research is becoming increasingly relevant to clinical practice as seen in molecular testing, genomics, precision medicine, advanced imaging, artificial intelligence, gene therapy, immunotherapy, and mRNA vaccines. But digital records, telemedicine, remote monitoring, and better public health surveillance are also impacting how services are organised. All in all, the developments provide possibilities for earlier identification, more focused therapy, better coordination and follow-up of patient outcomes.

But medical innovation has more to it than just science. New interventions come with a set of criteria of safety, effectiveness, affordability and appropriateness for the population to which they are directed. To implement new technologies in a responsible way, health systems require trained personnel, secure infrastructure, robust regulation, ethical protection and viable funding models. The continuing inequities in access to basic health services, prevention, and primary care illustrate that advanced services cannot solve for poor primary care, prevention and access to basic services. Innovation investment, however, must happen as well as making investments in the underpinnings of healthcare.

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