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Integrating Real-World Evidence (RWE) and Digital Health Technologies (DHTs) with AI for Enhanced Patient Outcomes (RE)

Varun Sethuraman, Hexaware Technologies, Chennai, India

ABSTRACT

The convergence of Real-World Evidence (RWE), Digital Health Technologies (DHTs), and Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming healthcare by enabling precise, efficient, and patient-centered interventions. RWE, derived from electronic health records, insurance claims, and patient registries, provides actionable insights into treatment effectiveness beyond controlled clinical trials. DHTs, including wearables and mobile health applications, capture real-time patient data that, when analyzed using AI's advanced algorithms, facilitate personalized treatment regimens, optimized clinical trials, and enhanced pharmacovigilance. A risk-based AI credibility assessment framework is essential to ensure model reliability, addressing challenges such as data quality, algorithmic bias, and transparency. Regulatory agencies like the FDA promote innovation through guidance on safe and trustworthy AI applications. By addressing ethical concerns such as privacy and equitable access, this integration promises to accelerate precision medicine and redefine healthcare delivery. Collaborative efforts among stakeholders will unlock the transformative potential of RWE, DHTs, and AI in modern healthcare.

INTRODUCTION

The practice of pharmacovigilance (PV) and clinical data management is currently facing an unprecedented **"data tsunami,"** with modern clinical trials collecting an average of **3.6 million data points**—roughly three times the volume of a decade ago. [24,26] Despite this influx of information, traditional reactive methods remain insufficient; statistics indicate that **over 90% of adverse drug events go unreported** through official channels, while manual case processing can consume up to two-thirds of a company's PV budget [24]. For experts in clinical data management (CDM) and CDISC standards, this environment demands a fundamental shift from reactive reporting to **proactive, AI-driven surveillance** integrated within standardized data flows.

The global healthcare ecosystem is currently navigating a structural transition from traditional, episodic care models toward a paradigm of **continuous, data-driven, and highly personalized medicine**. This evolution is predicated on the strategic convergence of Real-World Evidence (RWE), Digital Health Technologies (DHTs), and Artificial Intelligence (AI), three domains that collectively bridge the historical gap between controlled clinical experimentation and the complexities of routine medical practice. Real-World Evidence, derived from a diverse array of **Real-World Data (RWD) sources** including Electronic Health Records (EHRs), insurance claims, patient registries, and molecular biomarkers offers a longitudinal view of treatment effectiveness and safety across heterogeneous populations [30]. Simultaneously, DHTs, ranging from consumer-grade wearables to medical-grade remote monitoring sensors and mobile health (mHealth) applications, facilitate the high-frequency capture of physiological and behavioral data in real-time.

The synthesis of these data streams through AI's advanced computational capabilities allows for the extraction of nuanced insights that redefine therapeutic interventions, clinical trial design, and post-market surveillance.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this paper is to examine the strategic integration of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and **Real-World Evidence (RWE)** into the clinical research and pharmacovigilance lifecycle. Specifically, this analysis explores how AI-driven solutions can automate individual case safety report (ICSR) processing—reducing manual workloads by up to 80%—and accelerate safety signal detection by 40-50%.

The scope of this discussion encompasses:

• **The evolution of data standards:** Assessing how the **CDISC 360i initiative** and the **Unified Study Definition Model (USDM)** provide the modular metadata foundation required for machine-driven traceability and automation [41]

• **Regulatory frameworks:** Reviewing the **FDA's 2025 7-step credibility assessment framework** for AI models and recent guidances on the use of electronic health records (EHRs) and medical claims data for regulatory decision-making [40].

• **Methodological advancements:** Evaluating the use of **Natural Language Processing (NLP)** for unstructured data extraction, **Bayesian networks** for causality assessment, and **Federated Learning** for privacy-preserving analytics. [37]

Contextual Foundations

For clinical data experts, the transition to an AI-augmented future relies on the principle that **"AI cannot fix a broken process"** [41]. Successful implementation requires **interoperable data standards** (such as CDISC SDTM and ADaM) and **Common Data Models (CDMs)** like OMOP to ensure that disparate real-world datasets can be harmonized for scalable evidence generation [40].

Furthermore, as AI models move from exploratory tools to high-stakes decision-makers in treatment assignment or dosing, the industry must address the **"black box" nature of complex algorithms** through **Explainable AI (XAI)** [23, 24]. This paper provides the necessary technical and regulatory context to navigate these challenges, focusing on maintaining **100% data traceability and compliance** while harnessing the speed of AI to protect patient safety in real-time.

THE EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF EVIDENCE GENERATION

The foundational shift toward RWE is driven by the recognition that randomized controlled trials (RCTs), while remaining a cornerstone of clinical research, often suffer from limited generalizability due to stringent inclusion and exclusion criteria.[2, 7] These trials frequently exclude vulnerable or underrepresented populations, such as pregnant women, elderly patients with multiple comorbidities, and those living in diverse geographic or socioeconomic conditions.[8, 9] In contrast, RWE reflects the performance of medical products in actual clinical settings, encompassing broader demographic diversity and the realities of patient adherence and polypharmacy.[4, 7]

Digital Health Technologies have emerged as transformative tools for data collection, shifting the locus of clinical research from periodic hospital visits to the patient's daily environment.[2] Wearable devices provide a continuous stream of metrics such as heart rate, oxygen saturation, and gait patterns, while mHealth applications facilitate the collection of electronic patient-reported outcomes (ePROs).[2, 4] When these technologies are integrated into the RWE framework, they provide a higher resolution of patient health status, enabling the detection of subtle clinical changes that might go unnoticed in standard care.[5, 10]

RWD Source Category	Data Components and Origins	Primary Utility in Evidence Generation
Electronic Health Records (EHRs)	Clinical notes, laboratory results, diagnostic imaging, and medication history.[3, 11]	Longitudinal patient tracking, phenotype identification, and clinical endpoint validation.[2, 3]
Medical Claims and Billing	Procedures, pharmacy records, hospitalizations, and provider interactions.[3, 12]	Utilization trends, cost-effectiveness analysis, and large-scale safety monitoring.[6, 13]
Digital Health Technologies (DHTs)	Continuous physiological streams from wearables, sensors, and mHealth apps.[2, 5]	Real-time monitoring, digital biomarker development, and remote patient engagement.[14, 15]
Patient Registries	Disease-specific cohorts and longitudinal observational data.[3, 12]	Natural history of rare diseases, long-term safety, and comparative effectiveness.[4, 8]
Omics and Biomarkers	Genomic sequences, proteomic profiles, and ctDNA.[3, 4]	Precision medicine, early indicator identification, and patient stratification.[4, 16]

Artificial Intelligence Architectures for Multimodal Health Data

The integration of RWE and DHT data necessitates sophisticated AI architectures capable of processing voluminous, heterogeneous, and high-frequency datasets.[16] Standard relational databases often struggle with the velocity and variety of modern health data, prompting a shift toward scalable, AI-ready architectures such as distributed databases, cloud-native infrastructures, and microservices.[16] These systems are designed to handle not only

structured clinical data but also semi-structured and unstructured inputs, including medical imaging and natural language narratives.[16, 17]

Advanced Modeling with GNNs and Transformers

Recent advancements in deep learning have introduced architectures that are uniquely suited for the relational and temporal nature of health data.[18, 19] Graph Neural Networks (GNNs) are increasingly utilized to represent healthcare claims and clinical networks as interconnected nodes of patients, providers, and transactions, facilitating the identification of complex dependencies and outlier behaviors.[19] In cardiac care, GNNs have demonstrated consistent improvements in accuracy and interpretability over traditional statistical models, often outperforming them by 10 to 20 percentage points in risk mapping.[19]

Transformer models, known for their proficiency in capturing long-range dependencies, are being applied to dense sensor data from DHTs.[20] These models process raw photoplethysmography (PPG) traces or electrocardiography (ECG) spectrograms to create deep latent representations, which excel at estimating blood pressure and arterial stiffness compared to manual feature engineering.[20] The integration of these models into "digital twins"—virtual replicas of a patient's physiological state—allows for continuous, real-time updates and prospective simulation of treatment responses.[20, 21]

SCALABLE DATA ARCHITECTURES AND HOSPITAL PLATFORMS

To deploy these AI models at scale, hospital systems are adopting five-layer AI platform architectures that prioritize data governance and clinical feasibility.[22] These platforms transition from batched updates to intelligent, unified data pipelines that clean and standardize incoming data in real-time.[17] This pipeline approach utilizes multidimensional graph databases and vector databases to transform multimodal data into numerical embeddings that capture context and clinical relationships.[17]

Architectural Layer	Functional Purpose	Technologies and Mechanisms
Data Ingestion	Capturing real-time streams and batched EHR data.[17]	Unified data pipelines, IoT gateways, and microservices.[16, 17]
Storage and Lakehouse	Centralizing raw, curated, and enriched data.[17]	Data lakehouses, distributed file systems, and FHIR-compliant stores.[17, 22]
Processing and Vectorization	Converting data into AI-intelligible formats.[17]	Vector databases, embedding models, and hierarchical RAG.[17]
Security and Fabric	Ensuring data consistency and privacy across users.[17, 23]	Intelligent data fabric, access control permissions, and encryption.[17, 23]
Clinical Integration	Delivering insights within the existing workflow.[16, 22]	Embedded predictive alerts, decision support dashboards, and open APIs.[16, 22]

Optimization of Clinical Trials and Research Efficiency

The traditional clinical trial lifecycle is characterized by high costs and protracted timelines, often exacerbated by recruitment delays and high participant burden.[12, 13] AI and RWE are redefining this process by facilitating decentralized trial designs, optimizing protocol development, and creating innovative comparator arms.[7, 14]

Synthetic Control Arms and Virtual Cohorts

One of the most notable innovations is the use of Synthetic Control Arms (SCAs), which leverage RWD and historical trial data to create virtual comparator groups.[12, 13] By statistically matching these virtual cohorts to active treatment arms, researchers can reduce or eliminate the need for traditional placebo groups.[7, 12] This is particularly critical in oncology and rare disease research, where ethical considerations often make the use of placebos in life-threatening conditions difficult.[12, 13]

The SCA market is experiencing significant growth, with the oncology segment holding a major share of 47.50% as of 2024.[13] The hybrid model, which combines RWD with historical trial data, is projected to grow at a substantial CAGR through 2034.[13] AI models, including digital twins and prognostic covariate adjustment methodologies, have

gained regulatory interest; the EMA has qualified certain deep learning methodologies that generate digital twins to enhance statistical precision and reduce reliance on traditional trial designs.[21]

Precision Recruitment and Adherence Monitoring

AI also optimizes the initial phases of clinical trials by using NLP to parse massive EHR datasets and identify eligible participants based on complex phenotype descriptions.[6, 24] This automated screening reduces the site burden and accelerates recruitment timelines.[25] Furthermore, DHTs such as mHealth apps and smart reminders drive participant motivation and adherence, ensuring that the data collected during the trial is of the highest quality.[26] These tools can flag safety concerns or protocol deviations early, protecting the integrity of the study.[26]

Personalized Treatment and Clinical Decision Support

The integration of high-frequency DHT data with AI allows for the transition from generalized clinical guidelines to highly personalized treatment regimens.[1, 27] Generative AI models can summarize extensive patient histories, helping clinicians focus on complex needs while tailoring treatments based on genomics, lifestyle factors, and ongoing health information.[27]

Digital Twins and Simulation Loops

In cardiovascular care, the digital twin technology represents a shift toward predictive care.[20] By closing the loop between real-time data acquisition from wearable IoT devices—such as ballistocardiogram sensors and motion detectors—and personalized intervention, clinicians can trial different pacing or drug administration scenarios in a virtual environment before applying them to the patient.[20] These systems often utilize Bayesian estimation and Kalman filters to manage uncertainty in the data, ensuring that the virtual replica accurately reflects the physiological reality.[20]

Digital Biomarkers in Neurology and Behavioral Health

The discovery of digital biomarkers through AI analysis of DHT data is providing new ways to monitor chronic conditions remotely.[10, 14] For example, studies in Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) utilize AI-enhanced video capture to identify visual biomarkers related to symmetry, fluidity, and motor task speed.[10] In behavioral health, automated analysis of speech latency has been evaluated as a biomarker for schizophrenia and depression severity.[10]

Study Objective	Methodology and AI Application	Clinical Outcomes and Metrics
ALS Monitoring	AI-enhanced video analysis of sit-to-stand and motor tasks.[10]	Identification of visual biomarkers for remote progression monitoring.[10]
Schizophrenia Severity	Automated analysis of speech latency and facial expressivity via smartphones.[10, 28]	Significant correlation with PANSS negative subscale () and MADRS total score ().[10]
MDD Severity	Smartphone-based vocal and facial measurements.[28]	Clinically significant changes in MADRS scores () and increased facial expressivity.[28]
Cancer Diagnostics	AI examination of radiology and pathology images.[29]	Improved detection rates and clinical utility for commercialization.[29]

REDEFINING PHARMACOVIGILANCE THROUGH AI AND RWE

Post-market surveillance is transitioning from a reactive framework, reliant on spontaneous adverse drug reaction (ADR) reports, to a proactive, real-time monitoring system.[24, 30] AI-driven pharmacovigilance platforms analyze diverse data sources—including EHRs, insurance claims, social media, and wearable outputs—to detect safety signals with unprecedented speed and accuracy.[24, 30]

Real-Time Signal Detection

The use of machine learning algorithms allows for the identification of potential safety issues as they emerge in the real world.[30] For instance, AI platforms have demonstrated the ability to detect safety signals in under 24 hours,

compared to traditional workflows that often take weeks or months.[24] These systems achieve a 40% to 50% reduction in false positive signals by simultaneously analyzing thousands of variables and uncovering subtle correlations that manual reviews might miss.[24]

Automated Case Processing

NLP is a cornerstone technology for modern pharmacovigilance, as it enables the extraction of critical information from unstructured text reports, such as physician notes or patient emails.[24] AI extraction methods can reduce the manual workload of data entry by up to 80%.[24] Platforms like the FDA's Sentinel Initiative exemplify this shift, proactively monitoring safety across massive healthcare databases in real-time.[24]

Pharmacovigilance Metric	Traditional Systems	AI-Enabled Systems
Signal Detection Timeline	Weeks to months.[24]	Under 24 hours.[24]
Signal Evaluation Speed	Baseline benchmark.	~80% acceleration.[24]
Manual Data Processing	100% human-intensive.	Up to 80% reduction in manual effort.[24]
Predictive Accuracy	Reactive only.	>88% for ADR prediction in elderly populations.[24]
False Positive Signal Reduction	Variable.	40-50% reduction.[24]

THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR TRUSTWORTHY AI

As AI models become increasingly integral to drug development and regulatory submissions, agencies like the FDA and EMA are providing guidance to ensure these applications are safe and reliable.[1, 15, 31] The consensus among regulators is a risk-based approach that balances innovation with patient safety.[15, 32]

The FDA's 7-Step Credibility Assessment Framework

In January 2025, the FDA issued draft guidance outlining a 7-step process for establishing the credibility of AI models used to support regulatory decisions.[33, 34] "Credibility" is defined as the trust established through the collection of evidence in the performance of an AI model for a particular Context of Use (COU).[33]

Step 1: Define the Question of Interest

The process begins with clearly articulating the regulatory question the AI model is intended to address.[35, 36] This forces sponsors to tie the AI application to a concrete decision, such as patient risk stratification or quality control in manufacturing.[35, 36]

Step 2: Determine the Context of Use (COU)

The COU specifies the model's role, scope, and data inputs/outputs.[35, 36] It details how the AI findings will address the regulatory question and whether the outputs will autonomously make a decision or inform a human primary decision-maker.[35, 36]

Step 3: Assess AI Model Risk

Risk assessment is based on the intersection of model influence—the weight of the AI evidence relative to other data—and decision consequence—the potential severity of harm from an incorrect decision.[33, 35] High-risk models, such as those predicting life-threatening adverse reactions without human oversight, demand higher evidentiary standards.[35]

Step 4: Develop a Credibility Plan

Sponsors must create a plan tailored to the COU and commensurate with the risk level.[33] This plan includes model descriptions, data source validation, training processes, and specific performance metrics like uncertainty quantification.[33, 35]

Step 5: Execute the Plan

The plan execution involves conducting the proposed validation experiments and stress tests, calculating metrics such as sensitivity, specificity, and calibration across diverse cohorts.[9, 35]

Step 6: Document Results and Deviations

Sponsors must compile a credibility report documenting all outcomes and explaining any deviations from the original plan, such as data quality inconsistencies or shifts in model architecture.[33, 35]

Step 7: Determine Model Adequacy

The final step is a holistic determination of whether the collected evidence demonstrates that the AI model is fit for the specified COU and supports the regulatory decision-making process.[25, 35]

ADDRESSING ETHICAL CONCERNS AND BIAS MITIGATION

The rapid adoption of AI in healthcare raises significant ethical challenges, particularly regarding data privacy and algorithmic bias.[1, 9] AI systems trained on historical data may perpetuate or amplify existing biases against vulnerable or marginalized populations.[9, 37]

Bias mitigation is not a one-time event but a continuous process throughout the AI model lifecycle.[9] It begins during the conception phase with the involvement of diverse multidisciplinary teams and clearly defined, clinically oriented research questions.[9]

• **Pre-processing Mitigation:** Routine adoption of frameworks like PRISMA ensures that datasets are balanced and representative of various sociodemographic factors.[9, 38]

• **In-processing Mitigation:** Choosing architectures that prioritize interpretability and utilizing tools like SHAP or LIME can help identify which features are influencing predictions for specific subgroups.[9, 38]

• **Post-processing and Surveillance:** Adjusting decision thresholds for different populations and implementing longitudinal monitoring helps detect "algorithmic drift" or feedback loop biases after deployment.[9]

Privacy-Preserving Analytics: Federated Learning

To address privacy concerns while enabling multi-institutional collaboration, Federated Learning (FL) has emerged as a critical technology.[5, 39] FL allows for the training of AI models across decentralized data sources without the need to exchange raw patient records.[23, 39] Only model updates or anonymized insights are shared, ensuring that sensitive data remains behind local firewalls.[23] This approach is often augmented with differential privacy, which adds mathematical noise to results to prevent individual re-identification.[23, 37, 39]

Security Mode	Traditional Centralized Systems	Federated Data Exchange
Data Location	Moved to a central repository.[23]	Remains at its source.[23]
Privacy Risk	Single point of failure; high breach impact.[23]	Distributed risk; raw data never moves.[23]
Ownership	Data owners lose direct control.[23]	Owners retain absolute sovereignty.[23]
Compliance	Complex cross-border logistics.[23]	Simplified GDPR/HIPAA compliance.[23]
Cost	High cloud egress and transmission fees.[23]	Reduced infrastructure and logistics costs.[23]

THE FUTURE ROLE OF GENERATIVE AI AND AGENTIC SYSTEMS

Looking toward 2026, the adoption of multimodal AI models and generative AI (GenAI) is expected to expand significantly.[27] GenAI is already being used to structure unstructured insurance claims and automate the synthesis of patient histories, allowing healthcare professionals to focus on higher-order tasks.[6, 27]

In the near future, "agentic AI" systems may proactively identify eligible trial participants, adapt study protocols in real-time, and generate new hypotheses from ongoing high-frequency data streams.[25] These systems will likely play a foundational role in ensuring that evidence is not only generated faster but is also validated, explainable, and ready for regulatory scrutiny.[6, 25]

The integration of blockchain technology, zero-knowledge proofs (ZKP), and decentralized autonomous organizations (DAO) into health architectures—as seen in the PolyMed framework—proposes a future where patients have greater control over their health data.[40] By cryptographically verifying identities and intelligently analyzing physiological data at the edge, these systems aim to rebalance the power dynamics in healthcare, fostering a new level of transparency and trust between patients and the healthcare ecosystem.[37, 40]

COLLABORATIVE SYNTHESIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The transformative potential of RWE, DHTs, and AI in healthcare is contingent upon the continued collaboration of diverse stakeholders, including researchers, regulators, technology developers, and patient advocates.[1, 41] To unlock this potential and ensure improved patient outcomes, the following strategic priorities are identified:

• **Investment in High-Quality RWD:** The power of AI is directly proportional to the quality of the data it analyzes; organizations must prioritize the completeness, standardization, and clinical relevance of their real-world data sources.[3, 17]

• **Adoption of Risk-Based Frameworks:** Developers should proactively utilize frameworks like the FDA's 7-step credibility assessment and DiMe's Integrated Evidence Plans to ensure their solutions are regulatory-ready and clinically valuable.[29, 33]

• **Prioritizing Algorithmic Transparency:** To build trust among clinicians and patients, AI models must move away from "black box" operations toward explainable architectures that provide clear clinical rationales for their outputs.[15, 25, 38]

• **Commitment to Equitable Access:** Ensuring that DHTs and AI-driven interventions are accessible to and validated for diverse populations is essential to avoid widening existing health disparities.[9, 26]

By addressing these priorities, the healthcare community can transition from the episodic, reactive evidence models of the past to a future of continuous, predictive, and patient-centered precision medicine.[1, 4, 30] The convergence of Real-World Evidence, Digital Health Technologies, and Artificial Intelligence provides the necessary tools to achieve this vision, redefining the boundaries of clinical research and therapeutic delivery.[2, 3, 32]

CONCLUSION

The transition from reactive to **proactive pharmacovigilance** represents a fundamental overhaul of pharmaceutical drug safety, replacing episodic, manual reviews with **real-time surveillance** powered by AI and big data. [1, 4] The results of this shift are quantifiable, yielding efficiency gains of up to **80% in manual case processing** and a 40-50% acceleration in safety signal detection. For Clinical Data Management (CDM) and CDISC experts, these advancements necessitate a move away from "silos of excellence" toward a **Learning Health System** where data from every patient encounter informs continuous improvement in research and safety. [34]

The successful implementation of these technologies relies on the core principle that **"AI cannot fix a broken process"**. It requires a foundation of high-quality, research-ready data that is complete, standardized, and traceable [35]. To this end, the **CDISC 360i initiative** and the **Unified Study Definition Model (USDM)** provide the critical metadata-driven framework for end-to-end automation and machine-driven traceability across the research lifecycle. While advanced modeling techniques like **Graph Neural Networks** and **Transformers** excel at interpreting multi-dimensional sensor streams, they must remain anchored to established data standards such as **CDISC SDTM and ADaM**, which remain the regulatory requirements for submission. [33, 24]

Regulatory acceptance is increasingly governed by **risk-based credibility frameworks**, such as the **FDA's 7-step process**, which mandates that sponsors clearly define the **Context of Use (COU)** and perform rigorous validation of AI model risk. [24, 35] To address the "black box" nature of deep learning, organizations must prioritize **Explainable AI (XAI)** to articulate model reasoning and **federated learning** to enable secure analysis across distributed datasets without moving sensitive patient data. [24, 35]

Looking ahead, the role of the CDM and PV professional is evolving from a document processor to a **safety strategist and model validator**. This workforce must possess the **data literacy** to oversee AI-human collaborations, ensuring that technology amplifies clinical expertise rather than replacing it. Ultimately, the strategic convergence of

AI, RWE, and robust data standards will enable the **Clinical Evidence 2030 vision**, creating a patient-centered translational ecosystem that detects risks in hours rather than months and prioritizes proactive prevention across the global drug lifecycle.

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Your comments and questions are valued and encouraged.

Contact the author at:
Author Name Varun Sethuraman
Company: Hexaware Technologies
Address: Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India
Work Phone: +91 8754556144
Email: varuns8@hexaware.com
Website: https://www.hexaware.com