

[Diagnosics: Patients Want Results Now, and Fast](#)

Medical Device and Diagnostic Industry

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As more advanced apps and smart technologies enter in the consumer market, patients will continue to raise their expectations of the capabilities of medical devices and diagnostics. The pressure to lower healthcare costs is supporting the large growth of the home healthcare market.

Here are the main current trends in diagnostics, according to Mick Withers, senior vice president and head of medical at Sagentia (Cambridge, UK):

1. The convergence between consumer and medical products. People aren't only interested in getting basic healthcare information like cholesterol levels. They also want diagnostic information such as blood glucose levels and are looking for a more integrated approach to obtain this data (i.e., through apps). These products are being used less by qualified clinicians and are being treated more like consumer products. As a result, product designers need to think about the intuitiveness and user-friendly nature of devices at the earliest design stage.
2. The increasing requirement for data handling and getting the right information at the right time. "With mobile health developments we're seeing more remote sensors being integrated into networks, and with that comes the requirement to record the information and either put it through electronic data or deliver it to the healthcare professionals so they can use it in the full diagnostic arena," says Withers.
3. Companion diagnostics. "We're seeing fewer developments towards blockbuster scenarios where one solution is intended to fix one thing for all people, and it's more and more personalized," says Withers. "Instead of sledgehammers to fix specific healthcare needs, people are now looking to take a diagnostic test to tell them what's going to be required for them, and then to deliver them with the correct [therapy]."
4. Point-of-care diagnostics. Whether it's at a small clinic or an outreach center, people want the tests and equipment to be available to provide a diagnosis in a very short period of time, while they wait. "That [trend] feeds into things transitioning into the home and moving out of the large staging hospitals," says Withers. "Peoples' expectations now are that technology will be there for the amount of time that they need it."



Mick Withers on hurdles in the diagnostics segment

"The challenges are pretty much convergence. Medical companies still need to deliver quality results but probably without a clinician at hand. It means in terms of intuitive use and clear waiver—the ability to guarantee the product will deliver the right results without the training. [Medical companies are] used to delivering fully functional things that were normally not particularly attractive and not particularly intuitive in use, because the person who was using had been heavily trained.

[If manufacturers] want to transfer devices into a less-trained environment where they can send in larger volume, they're going to have to consider more how people use it and how they're going to use it successfully. In terms of remuneration, as the volumes go up, healthcare providers are going to require a clinical benefit in people not doing these tests in the clinical environment. If you're going to try to sell more of them into the home arena, you're going to have to guarantee that the quality of results is the same."

Whether it's the convergence with consumer goods, companion diagnostics, mobile health, or the worried well, the future of diagnostics will continue to move toward more specific data and personalized results. "While that's a good thing in that now people can get the right treatment, it means there's more data floating around," says Withers. "One of the challenges for diagnostic providers is that in the past the data was constrained within an instrument in a controlled environment, now as the space opens up a lot of data needs to be controlled, regulated, and stripped down to information."