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Beyond the Molecule: Supporting Oncologists and Patients in the Age of AI

Introduction

As artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT become increasingly accessible, a growing number of oncology patients are turning to AI before, during, and after their clinical consultations. This shift is reshaping the patient and healthcare provider (HCP) dynamic in real time, introducing new challenges around misinformation, decision-making, and trust.

To better understand this evolving landscape, Klick Health and Impiricus surveyed oncologists across the U.S. via SMS, tapping into Impiricus' proprietary opted-in HCP network. The findings reveal critical insights into how AI is being used by both patients and providers, as well as what oncology brand marketers, medical affairs teams, and sales professionals must do to stay relevant, supportive, and impactful in this new era of tech-enabled care.

Dr. Kashif Firozvi | Oncologist at Maryland Oncology Hematology

"Trying to keep up with the rapid changes is a challenge. Keeping up with all the new biomarkers and the different drugs that are coming out specific to those markers. I need bitesize peer reviewed content, and on demand easy access to resources."

Dr. Waqas Haque | Oncology Fellow at University of Chicago

"AI is fundamentally transforming the patient - oncologist relationship. While I love that my patients have more access to information than ever, it needs to be delivered in the right format to minimize misinformation and misconceptions about their diagnosis. Oncologists must actively collaborate with industry to ensure AI tools actually improve patient care."

Many Oncology Patients Are Reaching For AI

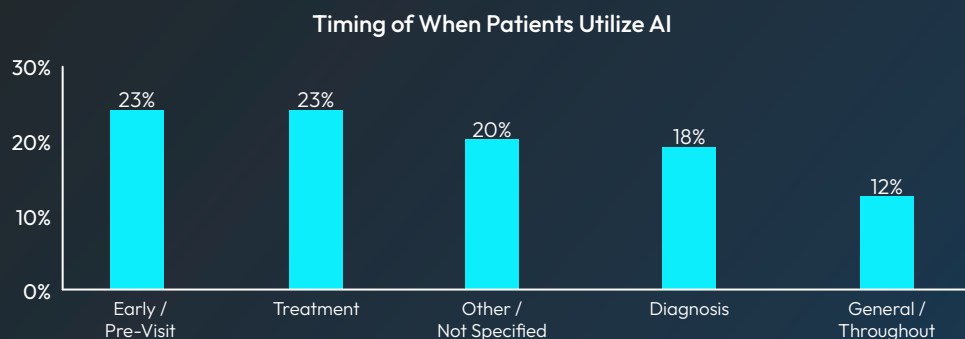## Question #1: Are your patients increasingly using AI (i.e. ChatGPT) before consulting you?
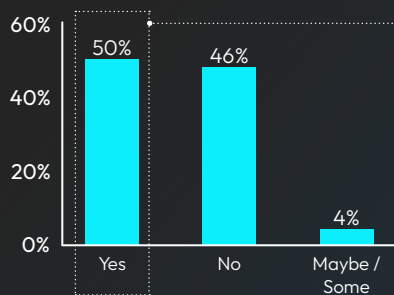
Half of surveyed HCPs reported that they have noticed their patients using AI during their patient journey.

Bar chart values:
- Yes: 50%
- No: 46%
- Maybe / Some: 4%

Some have noted the recency of this shift:

"Yes I have noticed this among at least a small portion of my recent patients where **it never happened before a couple years ago**."
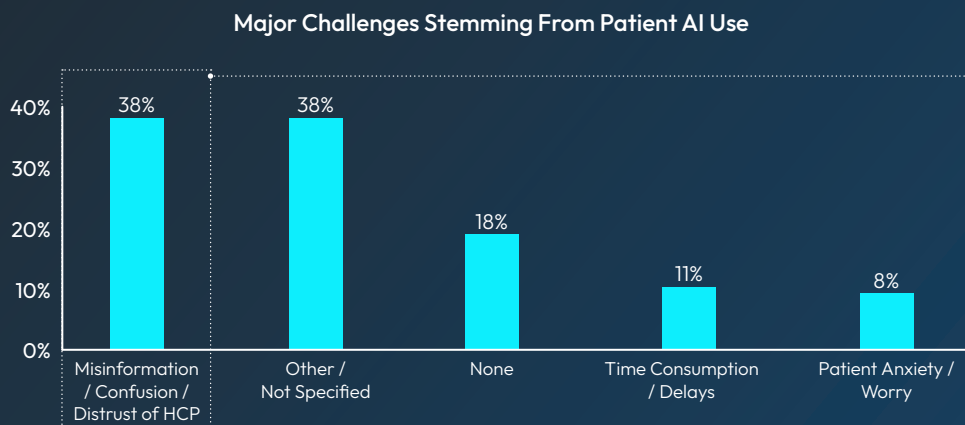
– Oncologist in Florida

Question #2A: When do patients typically use AI in their care journey?

Timing of When Patients Utilize AI

- Early / Pre-Visit: 23%
- Treatment: 23%
- Other / Not Specified: 20%
- Diagnosis: 18%
- General / Throughout: 12%

Surveyed HCPs are reporting that their patients that are **using AI are using it throughout the patient journey**.

Question #2B: What challenges (if any) does patient AI usage in their care journey create?

Major Challenges Stemming From Patient AI Use

- Misinformation / Confusion / Distrust of HCP: 38%
- Other / Not Specified: 38%
- None: 18%
- Time Consumption / Delays: 11%
- Patient Anxiety / Worry: 8%

The challenge of combating patients' confusion and distrust due to their AI utilization was the **most commonly reported** from surveyed HCPs.

Only 10% of oncologists stated patient AI usage has been helpful for understanding their options and knowing what questions to ask.

Voices From the Frontlines

Patient AI Usage

"Patients often consult AI early in the course of their disease and treatment. This leads to confusion and lack of trust if the AI recommendations do not align with our recommendations, which often happens because the information patients provide to AI can be both inaccurate and incomplete."

– Oncologist in California

"After a diagnosis is made, it helps and hurts. Information that is not pertinent to their specific case becomes distracting to their care plan."

– Oncologist in Virginia

"My patients are using AI when investigating treatment options; the challenge is that the answer is AI generated from a variety of sources and the patient thinks it is only from one single trusted oncology institution."

– Oncologist in New Jersey

"Patients typically use AI throughout. Most often, it's early in their journey, as they're looking at their symptoms and figuring out a different diagnosis. Thereafter, after treatment options have been suggested once a diagnosis has been made, they also tend to use AI tools."

– Oncologist in Massachusetts
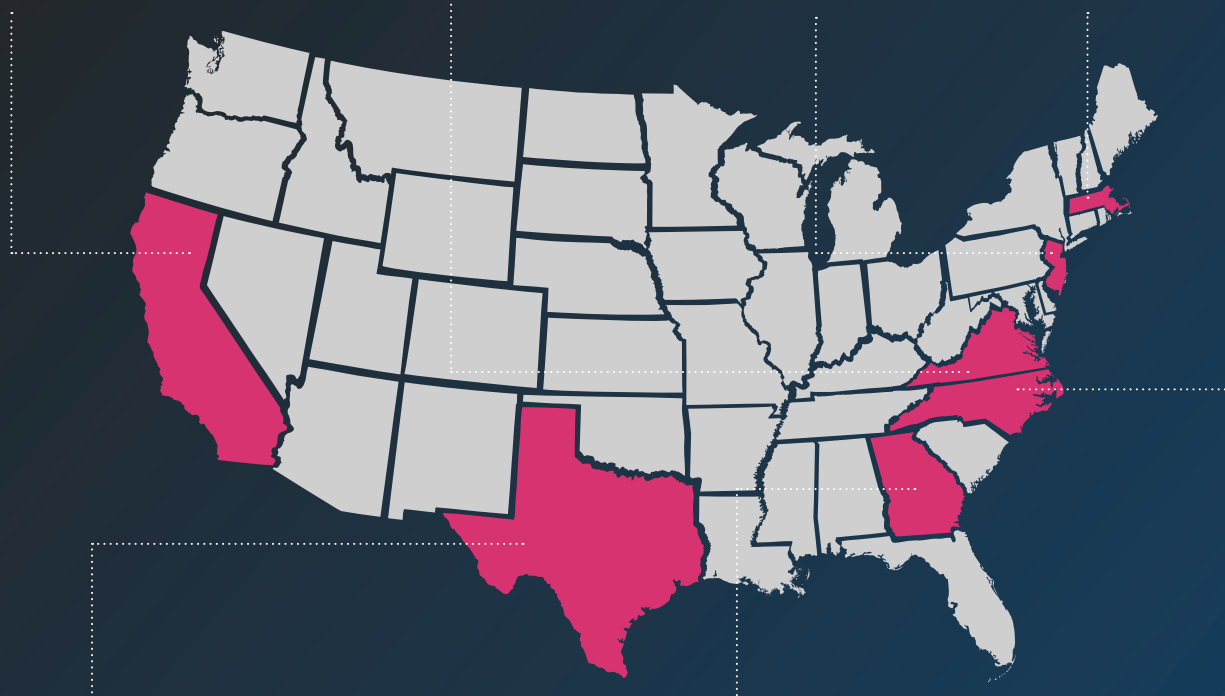
"My patients use AI...

1. Prior to the initial consultation for specific disease related information and treatment options.

2. After treatment recommendations are given, to confirm or sometimes for "virtual second opinions".

Challenges include "information overload" for the patient which can cause confusion and uncertainty. Additionally, incorrect or irrelevant information can be given by AI, particularly if the patient's queries are incomplete or off-topic."

– Oncologist in Texas

"While patient AI usage usually does not create any significant challenges, we discourage searches until we can provide one or two sessions of important information so they know more about what they are seeking."

– Oncologist in Georgia

"Patients use AI in preparation for first consultation, many misapply information to their case and will have misperceptions and misconceptions that don't apply to their specific cases. This consumes time at consultations."

– Oncologist in North Carolina

Oncologists Are Starting To, But Lagging in Adopting AI Tools

Question #3: Are you or your colleagues using resources like ASCO Guidelines Assistant?

Bar chart:
- Yes: 39%
- No: 61%
(Y-axis: 0% to 80%)
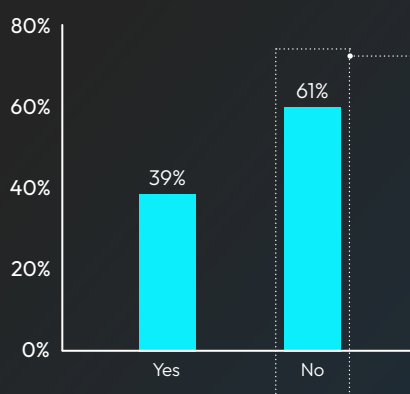
The majority of surveyed HCPs reported that they were **not yet using** AI-enabled resources like the ASCO Guidelines Assistant. However, 16% of responses indicated a growing momentum of AI adoption by surveyed oncologists and their colleagues.

Several HCPs noted that they use other traditional guidelines / resources:

"I usually use NCCN guidelines."
- Oncologist in Louisiana

"Just NCCN and pubmed right now."
- Oncologist in New Mexico

Others did not seem to know that tools like this were available:

"I was previously unaware of it until now."
- Oncologist in Indiana

"No, but would like to learn more."
- Oncologist in New Jersey

Oncologists Are Looking for AI Tools

Question #4: How can pharma better support your oncology practice, particularly in integrating AI and beyond drug development?

Top Response Categories

AI / Tech Integration (20% of Respondents)

"Investing in and collaborating on AI platforms and tools." - Oncologist in Texas

"The best way to apply AI is finding the best available treatment options and which center are they being offered." - Oncologist in Louisiana

"An app with clear treatment algorithms and discussion of options for patients."
- Oncologist in Tennessee

"An app that pulls info from a trusted resource where you can ask questions about drug interactions or dosage adjustments." - Oncologist in Indiana

Patient Education & Resources (15% of Respondents)

"Education re how to 'coach' patients in their use of AI and the pitfalls vs benefits." - Oncologist in Florida

"Provide proactive patient education materials that coincide with FDA and ASCO recommendations."
- Oncologist in Virginia

"Develop resources to guide patients to correct information and dispel the overwhelming amount of disinformation." - Oncologist in Georgia

"Work with oncologists to develop patient guidelines." - Oncologist in New Mexico

Other response categories: Drug Safety / Interactions / Dosing, Drug Updates & Medical Info, Clinical Trials & Research support, Education & Training for HCPs, Admin support

Voices From the Frontlines

Supporting Oncologists Beyond the Molecule

"Curating guidelines, algorithms for chemotherapy dosing, side effect management, drug-drug interaction checking, available clinical trials relevant to particular disease states."

- Oncologist in Indiana

"Would be great to have a brief tutorial on how or if we can use AI to help efficiently search available clinical trials, new drugs being developed or in study for specific diagnoses."

- Oncologist in Michigan

"Most importantly - we need alerts for drug interactions, promising off label uses, important contraindications and adverse effects."

- Oncologist in New York

"We probably should have some version of AI tools for healthcare providers that are different and have access to more data than what is available to the general public."

- Oncologist in Massachusetts
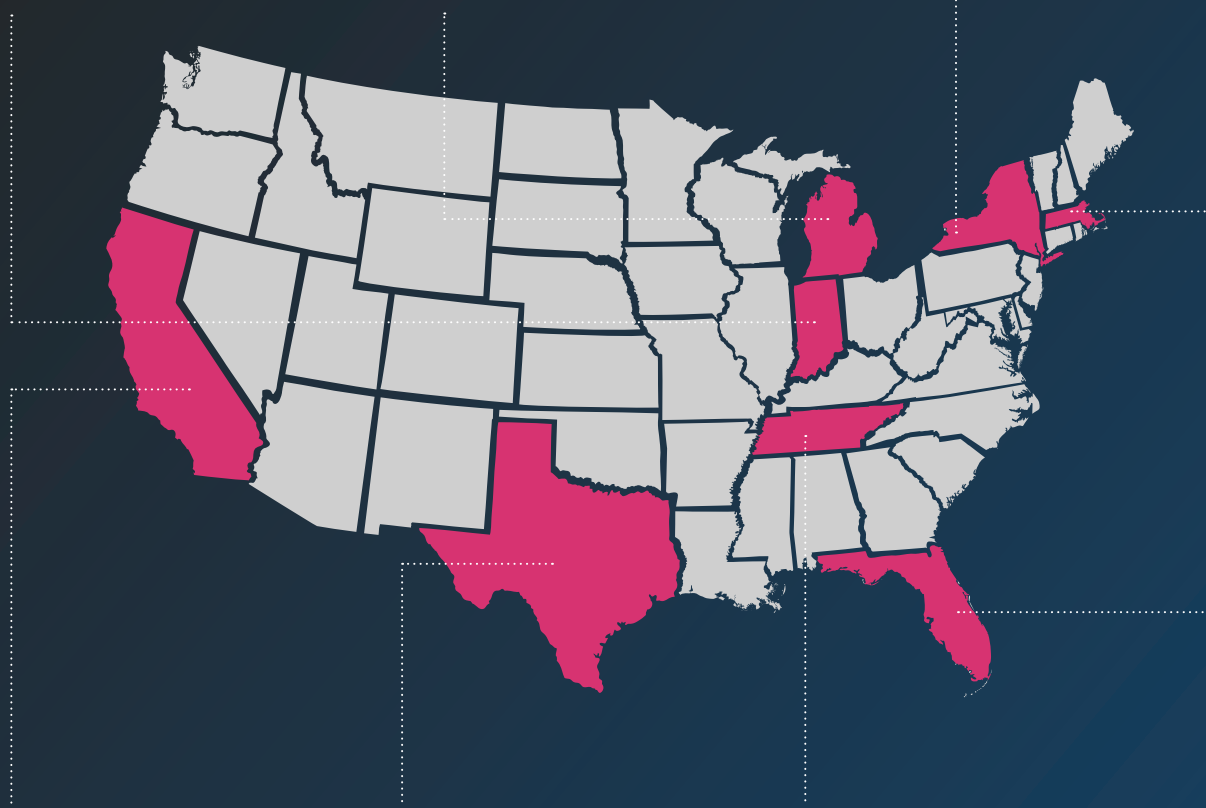
"Full knowledge of AEs is becoming more and more critical! As is drug interactions. And now that MTD is becoming less in favor, I need help with appropriate dosing."

- Oncologist in California

"One way pharma can support us is by texting information. Also, investing in and collaborating on AI platforms and tools."

- Oncologist in Texas

"Provide training to physicians on the proper use and advantages of AI. A lot of physicians are still not aware of all the applications of AI in their practice. Maybe hold webinars in AI applications in medicine or some similar programs."

- Oncologist in Tennessee

"Help synthesize new information for physicians to become acquainted with new drugs; however, it would be important that information is reliable and verifiable."

- Oncologist in Florida

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The AI-Powered HCP Engagement Engine.

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Insights from Klick Health

Brad Aufderheide, MPH | SVP, Oncology & Rare Disease Strategy

"Oncology and AI are both moving at the speed of light and the level of trust an HCP has in AI is going to be limited by their experience and familiarity in these tools. Today's marketers need to anticipate and meet oncologists where they are. And to think through how to use AI effectively in initiatives to help oncologists with their practice concerns that keep them up at night."

Brad Einarsen | SVP, Strategic Futures

"Oncologists are often tasked with trying to get patients to understand difficult and complex information about their condition. When confronted with patients who have mis-prompted AI tools, they need help with how to combat the misinformation. Brands that provide this help can materially improve the professional lives of oncologists and their patients."

Insights from Oncology Marketing Leaders

Brooke Fleming | Director, Commercial Digital Strategy & Execution, BeOne Medicines USA

"There's a critical need for AI and machine learning in patient education, both inside and outside of pharma. Many don't realize that AI's accuracy depends entirely on the quality of its source data and with the internet full of partial truths, misinformation can easily be mistaken for fact. I understand why oncologists and their teams find this challenging. AI is powerful, but it must be used as a complementary tool. We also need to address biases in source data. These biases shape what language models share, so pharma must take a strong approach to cleaning data and correcting for bias before publishing anything AI might use. This may require shifts in how we work, and while progress is happening, there's still much to do.

Finally, to drive HCP interest and adoption, we must support their entire practice with useful, trustworthy information. Building relationships of trust will be key to integrating reputable AI tools into care."

Darrell Wakefield | Vice President of Precision Oncology Marketing, Exact Sciences

"As patients increasingly turn to AI tools to guide their cancer journey, the role of oncology marketers is shifting in real time. We're no longer just competing for attention, we're competing with algorithms that are shaping patient perceptions before they even walk into the clinic. This presents a real opportunity for brands to lead with innovation. We need to think beyond traditional content and start building AI-aware strategies. That means creating resources that are not only medically accurate but also optimized for how patients are searching, questioning, and learning, often through AI interfaces.

Brands should also consider how they can support oncologists directly. That could mean co-developing AI-powered tools that simplify clinical decision-making, or offering patient education materials that are designed to be AI-compatible, structured in ways that large language models can interpret and relay accurately."

Conclusion

The rise of AI in oncology is no longer theoretical; it's happening in real time and reshaping how patients engage with their care. From pre-visit research to treatment decisions, patients are increasingly turning to AI tools, often without the guidance of their healthcare providers. This trend is creating new challenges around misinformation, trust, and clinical workflow. At the same time, many oncologists remain unaware of or under-utilize AI-enabled resources themselves.

For pharma, this presents a critical opportunity to lead, not only in drug development but also in digital enablement, education, and support. The insights from this survey offer a clear call to action for oncology brand marketers, medical affairs teams, and sales reps to evolve their strategies and meet the moment.

Next Steps

For Brand Marketers

Position your brand as a digital partner through tools, platforms, and educational resources that are easy to understand and align with clinical standards.

Address patient misinformation proactively with campaigns that counteract confusion caused by AI use, reinforcing trust in evidence-based care and brand credibility.

Co-create patient tools by collaborating with oncology practices to produce clear, educational content that supports patients from diagnosis to treatment decisions.

For Medical Affairs Teams

Launch initiatives to raise awareness and adoption of AI-enabled tools like the ASCO Guidelines Assistant among oncologists.

Partner with technology providers to pilot AI solutions that streamline EMR integration, treatment planning, and decision support for HCPs.

Create educational materials and training that help HCPs responsibly use AI tools and effectively communicate with patients who bring AI-generated insights into the exam room.

For Sales Reps

Use sales visits to share relevant AI trends and tools, positioning yourself as a resource for navigating the evolving patient-HCP dynamic.

Equip oncologists for AI-informed patient journeys with materials such as pre-visit guides, treatment discussion resources and post-consultation references.

Share real-world examples of success and highlight how other practices are using AI to effectively improve care processes, offering practical inspiration and building confidence in tech adoption.

About Impiricus & Klick Health

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Impiricus is the first and only AI-powered HCP Engagement Engine. Founded by a practicing physician and a senior pharmaceutical executive, Impiricus was created to cut through the noise and put physician care delivery at the forefront. With our unique frontline access to 1 million+ HCPs, their insights, and clinical expertise, we are the #1 provider of the real-time channels and AI technology that life science companies need to deliver clear, reliable, and evidence-based resources directly into the hands of HCPs.

Guided by a council of 2000+ trusted HCP advisors, we ensure every message leads to better patient care. Welcome to the future of ethical physician and pharma collaboration!

Partner with us:
https://impiricus.com/contact-us/

Klick Health is the world's largest independent commercialization partner for life sciences, focused on hacking the boundaries of health by developing, launching, and supporting life sciences brands to achieve their full potential. The agency provides best-in-class marketing and advertising, media strategy and purchasing, medical affairs and medical communications, value and market access services, as well as enterprise omnichannel enablement among its specialized offerings.

Klick's client service is rooted in deep medical and scientific understanding, enabled by nearly 250 post-graduate, in-house medical experts; unrivaled decision sciences capabilities; and innovative, results-driven creative.

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