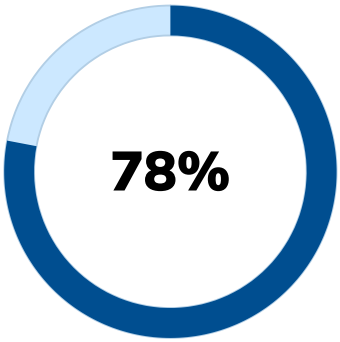
HCP AI Adoption: Three Key Insights for Pharma Marketing

Based on a Q2 2025 survey of over 100 healthcare professionals on the Sermo Realtime Network, this analysis identifies critical opportunities for pharmaceutical companies to provide critical information during the HCP prescribing process using strategically deployed AI tools.

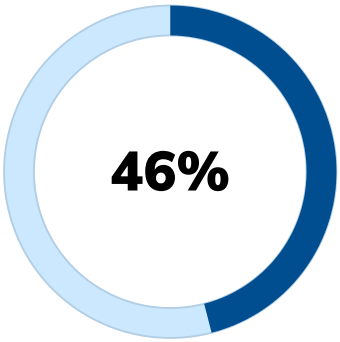
Literature Search and Diagnosis Assistance Top Use Cases

Healthcare providers have clear priorities when using AI in clinical practice.



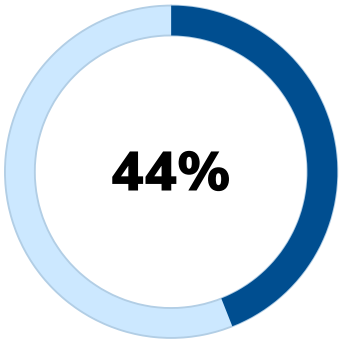
Literature Search

Seeking current, comprehensive information to inform treatment decisions



Diagnosis Assistance

Using AI as a safety net to ensure symptoms and test results drive correct conclusion



Summarize Patient Info

Efficiency play as well as an opportunity to use AI to capture and analyze patient data

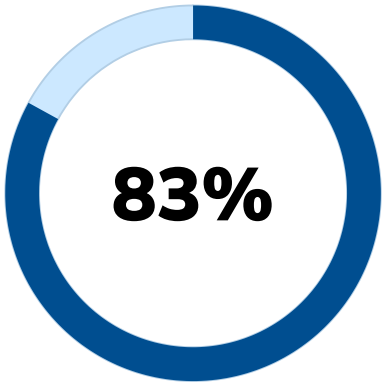
This hierarchy reveals something fundamental about how providers approach AI: they prioritize evidence-based decision support and clinical reasoning above all else. The 78% who use AI for literature search are seeking current, comprehensive information to inform treatment decisions. The 46% using AI for differential diagnosis assistance are leveraging it as a safety net—a way to ensure that symptoms and test results drive the correct clinical conclusion.

When 44% of providers use AI to synthesize complex patient data, they're preparing for treatment decisions. The quality and completeness of the information AI provides about specific medications—including how they fit particular patient profiles—can directly shape prescribing behavior.

Notably, these top three use cases—literature search, diagnosis assistance, and patient information summation—occur primarily at the point of clinical reasoning and treatment decisions. They're not just administrative tasks or post-decision documentation. **They're integral to the diagnostic and treatment planning process, making them high-value targets for pharmaceutical companies seeking to provide HCPs with meaningful information.**

Impact on Treatment Decisions

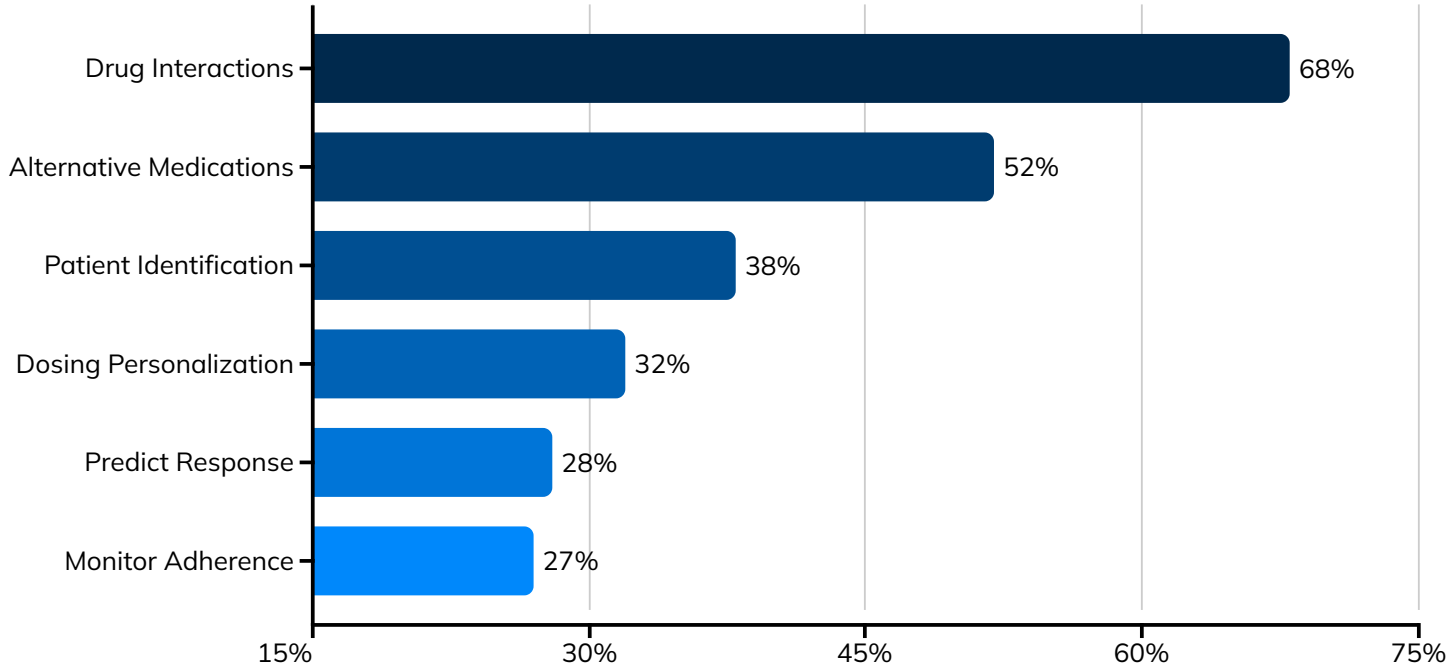
The survey reveals that AI tools already impact pharmaceutical treatment decisions for **86% of providers**, though the depth of that influence varies. Fifteen percent report "significant impact," 32% cite "moderate impact," and 39% report "slight impact." Only 13% say AI doesn't impact their decisions. Yet, fully 83% of physicians surveyed indicated that **"when AI recommendations differ from my initial assessment regarding treatment, I consider AI input but rely on my personal judgement."**



Trust Personal Judgement Over AI Input

The critical finding emerges when AI recommendations conflict with provider assessments. **This healthy skepticism reveals that providers want AI as an advisor, not a decision-maker. They're using AI to pressure-test their thinking, not replace it.**

Q: In which specific ways has AI influenced your medication selection or management?



This creates a nuanced opportunity for pharmaceutical companies. The goal isn't to make AI recommendations that providers blindly follow—providers have made clear they won't do that. Instead, the opportunity lies in providing information that strengthens providers' confidence in appropriate prescribing decisions. When AI surfaces evidence supporting a treatment choice the provider is already considering, it reinforces that decision. When it highlights a potential issue, it prompts reconsideration.

Pharma Engagement Preferences

Healthcare providers ranked their preferences for AI-related support from pharmaceutical companies and how they want to learn about innovations. The results fundamentally challenge traditional pharmaceutical marketing.

What Providers Want

Disease-specific AI tools that integrate with treatment protocols dominated with 27% ranking this first. Evidence demonstrating clinical impact earned 21% of first-place votes, while integration with medication management systems and tools to identify appropriate patients each captured 14%. Educational resources about AI applications received 17% first-place rankings.

How They Want to Learn

Peer-reviewed publications led with 40% ranking them first, followed by in-person demonstrations at 20%. However, this reveals an important distinction—providers want rigorous evidence as validation, but they need hands-on experience with tools to drive adoption. Publications prove tools work; demonstrations show providers how to use them.

The Traditional Marketing Collapse

Detail representatives ranked eighth (second-to-last) by 27% of providers, with only 4% placing them first. Pharmaceutical HCP-focused websites fared worse—29% ranked them eighth and only 4% first. Educational webinars and conference presentations showed moderate but not primary interest, with only 8% and 6% rating them first in learning preference respectively.

The integration imperative: Integration with medication management systems earned strong secondary as a type of valuable AI-related support, with 53% of providers ranking it in their top three choices. This signals that seamless workflow integration is expected, not optional.

The Implication for Pharma

Providers want pharmaceutical companies to develop specialized clinical tools, validate them through rigorous research, demonstrate them hands-on, and integrate them into existing workflows. They explicitly reject traditional marketing approaches. **The 27% who prioritized disease-specific AI tools represents nearly triple the 10% who valued case studies**—a striking shift from healthcare marketing's traditional reliance on clinical narratives. Providers want functional tools that make them better clinicians, not marketing content that makes products look good.

Strategic Implications

These findings reveal a clear strategic opportunity for pharmaceutical companies willing to prioritize clinical utility over traditional marketing.

Build for Clinical Reasoning, Not Just Information Retrieval

With 78% of providers using AI for literature search, 46% for differential diagnosis assistance, and 44% to summarize patient information, pharmaceutical companies must ensure their medications are comprehensively represented in AI tools at the point of clinical decision-making. This means providing structured, high-quality data to AI platforms and developing tools that excel during the diagnostic and treatment planning process.

Design for Influence, Not Control

Since 83% of providers consider AI input while relying on personal judgment, the goal is reinforcing appropriate prescribing decisions, not overriding clinical expertise. AI tools should present evidence that builds provider confidence in selecting the right medication for specific patients. Tools that identify suitable patients (53% value this highly) and compare treatment options based on outcomes, cost, and coverage (56% value this) align with this approach.

Measure Utility Not Just Awareness

Traditional pharma metrics focus on message reach. But with 86% reporting AI influences treatment decisions, success metrics should track whether AI tools are used at the point of prescribing and whether they surface medications appropriately with compelling evidence. Usage data from integrated tools matters more than call frequency.

The Execution Framework

Develop disease-specific AI tools focused on literature search, diagnosis support, and patient information synthesis. Validate them through peer-reviewed research. Integrate them with EHR and medication management systems. Demonstrate them in person. Design them to make providers better clinicians rather than push specific products.

Summary

The fundamental insight is that pharmaceutical marketing must evolve from pushing messages to providing utility. Providers are using AI daily to make better clinical decisions. Pharmaceutical companies that help them do that—with specialized tools, robust evidence, and seamless integration—will influence prescribing far more effectively than those relying on traditional detailing.

The survey data also reveals that **72% of providers agree that pharmaceutical companies providing valuable AI tools would influence their perception of and engagement with that company.** This isn't theoretical—providers are explicitly saying they're open to pharma-provided AI tools if those tools deliver genuine clinical value.

> **The winning strategy:** Develop disease-specific AI tools focused on literature search, drug interaction checking, and identifying appropriate patients. Integrate these tools with existing medication management systems and EHRs. Demonstrate them in person to drive adoption. Provide peer-reviewed evidence of their clinical impact. And critically, design them to make providers better clinicians rather than to push specific medications.

Companies that execute this strategy will differentiate their brands, strengthen provider relationships, and impact treatment decisions at scale—all while **providing genuine clinical value that improves patient care.**

The survey was fielded on the Sermo Realtime Network, powered by Sermo's global community of 1M+ triple verified HCPs and their RealTimesurvey technology, with on-demand access to HCP insights across the world in as little as 24 hours.

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