A BLIZZARD OF BREAKTHROUGHS

Why the acceleration of medical innovation makes communication more important than ever.

THOUGHTPIECE
6 MIN READ
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In 2024, the FDA approved 50 novel drugs - the highest sustained pace in the agency's history. ClinicalTrials.gov crossed 530,000 registered studies by early 2025, adding more than 35,000 new trials every year. And the number of drug programmes originating from AI-assisted discovery rose from roughly 24 in late 2023 to more than 173 by early 2026. The pace of change is unprecedented.

50

Novel drugs approved by the FDA in 2024. A decade-high pace.

FDA.GOV, 2024

530K+

Registered studies on ClinicalTrials.gov, early 2025.

CLINICALTRIALS.GOV, 2025

173

AI-originated drug programmes. Up from ~24 in late 2023.

ALLABOUTAI, 2026

> ***That's a sevenfold increase in less than two years.***

The challenge for the innovators is to be seen and heard above the noise. The task of cut-through, clarity and differentiation is tougher than ever.

COMMUNICATIONS ARE JUST ADDING TO THE NOISE

The same tools driving this expansion are simultaneously flooding every channel through which scientific discovery needs to travel.

AI can compress drug development from ten to fifteen years. But it can also generate content at a scale no previous technology has approached. Every organisation competing for the attention of clinicians, payers, and investors now has access to the same tools, capable of producing the same volume of communication at the same speed.

But the pace of communication is not the problem. It's the quality.

The conditions producing more genuine breakthroughs are also producing a communication environment in which those breakthroughs are harder to distinguish. Better science can, counterintuitively, produce more confusion - because the competition for credibility is intensifying alongside the quality of the science itself.

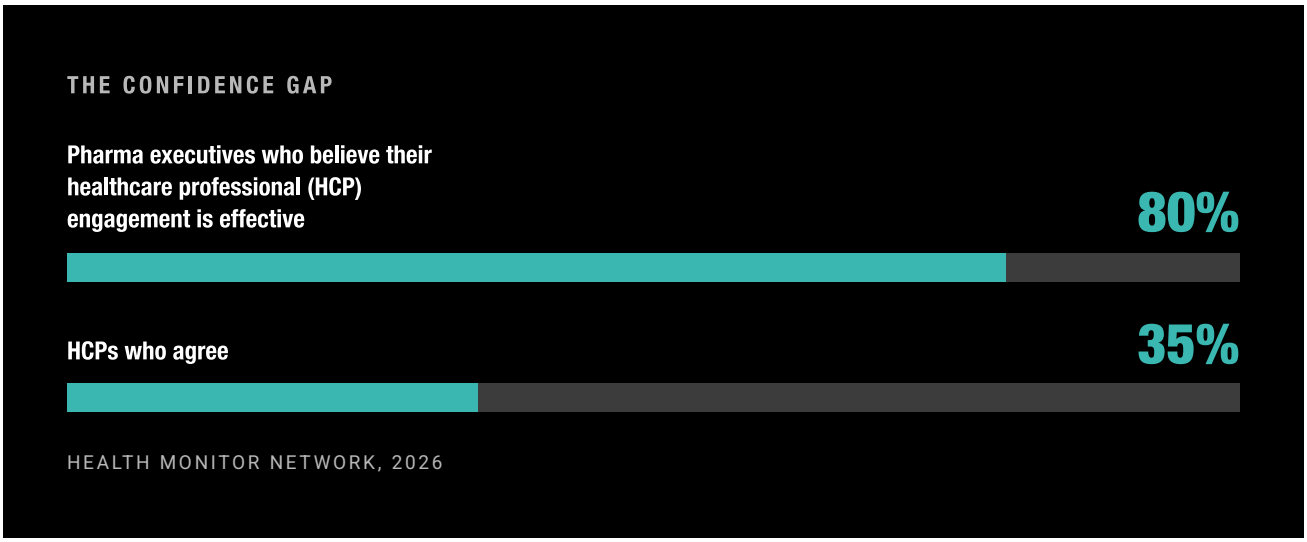
Communication of innovation needs to be simpler, more relevant, and more distinct.

AN EXPERT DIAGNOSIS

Oliver Wyman published a piece last year arguing that pharma's real innovation gap is communicative rather than scientific. Biopharma, they noted, leads the world in discovery whilst operating in marketing terms like it is still the twentieth century - relying on broadcast television advertising that has become, in their words, "clichéd, tiring, and sometimes annoying." Their prescription - more authenticity, more personalisation, better digital channels - is directionally correct.

But it doesn't reach the structural problem underneath. Better personalisation doesn't change the reality: the pool of innovations competing for the same audience's attention is expanding far faster than that audience's capacity to evaluate them.

It's still just one of 173 AI-originated candidates trying to earn trust with a sceptical physician, who's bombarded with competing messages.



And the attention problem is compounding. Breakthroughs are no longer competing only with other brands for a clinician's cognitive space. They are competing with their entire digital environment: AI-generated patient summaries, real-time literature alerts, clinical decision support tools running in the background of every consultation.

The available mental real estate for new therapeutic information is shrinking even as the volume of it grows.

THE ATTENTION DEFICIT

What the acceleration of discovery creates, in practice, is a structural advantage for organisations with established clinical relationships.

Existing key opinion leader (KOL) networks, trusted payer channels, and reputational credibility built over years in a specific indication give established players a head start that scientific merit alone cannot quickly overcome.

This has always mattered. The difference now is scale and speed. When a handful of genuinely novel treatments entered a therapeutic area each decade, the system had time to absorb them. When hundreds of genuinely novel treatments are entering clinical development simultaneously - many in overlapping indications, all competing for the same finite windows of clinical attention - communication stops being a downstream activity that follows the science. It becomes part of the competitive infrastructure itself.

The question is no longer purely whether you can reach the right people. It is whose voice those people already trust - and why.

IF THAT'S THE DIAGNOSIS, WHAT'S THE CURE?

In an earlier piece, we argued that clinical breakthroughs have always deserved breakthrough communication - and that the industry's long preference for evidence alone over belief change has left proven therapies underused and commercial launches sadly stranded.

That argument was built on a decade of launch data. It stands. But the context around it has shifted in ways that make it more urgent than the data alone suggests.

1-2 YRS

Until the first drug approved primarily through AI-assisted discovery is expected to arrive.

DRUG TARGET REVIEW, 2026

The pipeline behind it is growing at a pace that would have seemed implausible three years ago.

The communication challenge this creates is not simply one of doing things better. It is one of doing things that are genuinely different.

It must tell people a new story, and present it clearly and simply. And simplification is not an abdication of rigour. It shows ultimate respect for people's time and bandwidth.

It must differentiate itself from the noise. Again this is to help our audience understand the difference, rather than having to work it out themselves.

And it should present this story beautifully, using words and visualisations that dramatise the benefits. It should feel like a narrative not a spreadsheet.

And, of course, it should provide the evidence, presented clearly and powerfully. Not leading the argument, or as a separate support for it. But integrating it so that the science is as powerfully communicated as its impact.

There is a persistent myth that serious science requires dry storytelling. Yet the medical world is one of the most inventive, lateral, and creative industries on the planet. It is time our communications matched the ingenuity of the science we represent.

> ***When innovation comes this thick and fast, even the most vital treatments can get lost in the flurry. We owe it to the science to build communication that clears a path.***

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Art&Medicine is a healthcare communications company working at the intersection of clinical science and creative craft. Our proposition is simple: clinical breakthroughs deserve breakthrough communication.

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Seeing is believing