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# Haleon's Nick Tate: Tech Partnerships Key To Unlocking Digital Consumer Health Future

by David Ridley

"There's no one company, government, person or technology who is positioned to 'solve' the health of the world," notes Haleon's Nick Tate. Which is why OTC companies are partnering with tech firms large and small to create the next generation of consumer healthcare products and services. In the first part of an exclusive interview on the future of digital consumer health, Tate – who heads up the firm's incubator business, Haleon NEXT – discusses some of the complications of tech innovation that make such collaboration attractive.

If consumer healthcare companies are to seize the significant opportunity represented by digitalization, it is likely they will have to partner with tech firms like *Google Health* and *Microsoft Corporation*.

Many leading OTC firms are already doing this. *Haleon plc* has recently collaborated with Microsoft to expand the latter's Seeing AI program – which allows users to scan barcodes and hear information on packs – to cover 1,500 of the former's products.

In this Q&A, Haleon's digital health tech expert Nick Tate, who heads up the firm's incubator business, Haleon NEXT, discusses some of complications facing consumer health companies that make such collaboration attractive.

Among other things, companies must work together to make the mass of data generated by apps and wearables usable, navigate regulation that is still playing catch up with artificial intelligence-based innovation, and educate and empower consumers to be in the driving seat of the health tech revolution, Tate explains.

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Partnering with tech-savvy firms large and small, as exemplified by Haleon NEXT's Re/Wire Health Studio initiative, is a quick and effective way for consumer health companies to orient themselves and move forward on this challenging but exciting terrain, he suggests.

After all, he notes, "there's no one company, government, person or technology who is positioned to 'solve' the health of the world."

**Q** **How far are we away from AI enabled self-care?**

**A**  We're already seeing technology enable better self-care. From improving the accessibility of everyday medicines with innovations such as Seeing AI, to devices that enable one to monitor their general health and wellbeing and specific health conditions, such as diabetes where wearable glucose monitors are now becoming commonplace.

But for this technology to be truly useful we need far more interoperable data sets and for people to be able to use and interpret it to act, not just be made aware. Everyday single smart devices are AI enabled and, through amassing data sets, they become more intelligent with every interaction. Take something like Alexa which has been Hippa compliant for the last four years – this will likely eventually use AI as a way to both diagnose a condition and treat. There is also the question of trust in this space. Artificial intelligence can make humans smarter and more effective, but in healthcare there are significant questions to be answered and wrestled with when it comes to what we want a technology to do for us or on our behalf. That's really important when it comes to building consumer trust, intimacy and how our data is shared.

**Q** **Will AI enabled digital health applications overtake pills and supplements as the main way for people to self-care in the future?**

**A**  Overtake? No. We're still a long way from curing the common cold and if the last three years have taught us anything it's that medicines are really important in helping people to care for themselves. More likely, technology will become increasingly complementary, and the different therapies will combine to provide people with holistic healthcare. Healthcare is shifting towards a much greater focus on the

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prevention of ill health, and this is where digital health applications can have a significant impact. From helping people better understand their health, and how to stay well, to supporting earlier detection of diseases, technology can certainly help to build self-efficacy in people which is incredibly important when it comes to establishing healthy behaviors, mindsets and preventative health.

**Q** What are the regulatory and safety risks of digital health that the consumer healthcare industry will need to address if it is to make the most out of the AI opportunity?

**A** First and foremost is data. The industry must ensure that any data that is used or stored in digital health applications is used ethically and kept confidential and private. Also, one must understand where data is being stored, how it's being used, who has access to it and for how long. We want to ensure our patients and experts trust us with the data they share with us, and collaborating with the likes of Microsoft, which also places high importance on this, ensures we do this well. We must also ensure that the industry seeks to tackle data bias in AI algorithms so that innovations seek to close rather than widen the health inclusivity gap.

When it comes to regulatory processes, digital therapeutics and digital health are in their infancy, but they represent an opportunity for a different conversation with regulatory and safety agencies. By its very nature digital health will change on a day to day basis, responding, iterating and improving based on user needs and new data. This makes for a more dynamic conversation and represents huge opportunities when we consider how digital health can help us to improve health outcomes.

**Q** Can consumer healthcare companies lead this area of innovation, or will they need to work closely with big tech companies and smaller innovative firms?

**A** The reality is health will become more complicated, more burdensome and tricky to navigate. To make a dent we need to work together, in partnership. It's incredibly exciting to think about how smart partnerships (big and small) can come together to solve the world's biggest everyday health problems. This is the approach Haleon is taking, seen recently through our collaboration with Microsoft SeeingAI and the

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Haleon NEXT Re/Wire program working with smaller innovative firms.
Haleon NEXT, the innovation arm of Haleon, runs The Re/Wire program. Here we partner with start-up founders who align with our ambition to deliver better everyday health by developing the next generation of digital health services which will enable people to better manage their overall health and wellbeing. The program has uncovered potentially transformational consumer health innovations and innovators in the fields of oral care, behavior change, women's health and the gut microbiome. With so much innovation occurring within smaller start-ups, there's a role to play for larger organizations in supporting rapid innovation. Those selected by the Haleon NEXT Re/Wire program benefit from a three-month virtual support program, with a carefully curated development program covering strategy road-mapping, product viability, brand development, behavioral economics and regulatory compliance. They will also benefit from Haleon's insights into fast-track global scaling and commercialization, as well as networking opportunities.