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News We're Watching: GE And Google Announce AI Initiatives, Medtronic Announces Approvals, And More

by Reed Miller

Medtech Insight's News We're Watching highlights medtech industry developments that you may have missed over the last few weeks. UK-based CMR Surgical announced more milestones, Newfoundlound Diagnostics introduced a new UTI diagnostic, Google announced a new health care-oriented large language model, and more.

GE Buys AI-Imaging Software Maker MIM

GE HealthCare plans to acquire MIM Software, an Ohio-based provider of medical imaging analysis and artificial intelligence (AI) software for radiation oncology, molecular radiotherapy, diagnostic imaging, and urology.

Terms of the deal are not disclosed, but GE said it will pay for the deal with cash on hand.

"Over the past two decades, we have worked to develop innovative, vendor-agnostic products and deliver quality services to earn the trust of our customers; this will not change," said MIM CEO Andrew Nelson. "As part of GE HealthCare, we will develop new and increasingly integrated digital solutions to meet our customers' most complex and pressing needs, today and into tomorrow."

GE expects MIM's software to improve so-called "theranostics" to help treat advanced prostate, neuroendocrine, and thyroid cancer. The software can also streamline radiation oncology workflows simplify complex cancer treatment plans.

MIM's technology can also be applied to beta-amyloid neurology imaging for Alzheimer's

diagnosis and patient monitoring or myocardial perfusion imaging to diagnose coronary artery disease.

FDA Approves Medtronic's DBS For Movement Disorders

The US Food and Drug Administration approved *Medtronic*'s Percept RC rechargeable deep brain stimulation (DBS) with the BrainSense software and SenSight directional leads, the company announced on 8 January.

Medtronic claims Percept RC is the only deep-brain stimulator with sensing, directionality, and advanced programming capabilities. It is intended to provide personalized treatment for patients with movement disorders such as Parkinson's disease, essential tremor, dystonia, and epilepsy. (Also see "*Medtronic Hires New Neuromodulation Leader*" - Medtech Insight, 4 Oct, 2023.)

Medtronic is the market leader *in neuromodulation*, controlling about three-quarters of the deep-brain stimulation market. (Also see "*Exec Chat: Medtronic Neuromodulation Approaches Inflection Point*" - Medtech Insight, 26 Aug, 2022.)

At the J.P. Morgan Health Care Conference in San Francisco, Medtronic CEO Geoff Martha cited Percept RC, along with Medtronic's Inceptiv closed-loop spinal cord stimulator as examples of "how Medtronic engineers are really leading the industry in innovation, developing smaller devices and inventing sensing technology to improve therapeutic benefit."

Inceptiv received a CE mark in August.

"Both devices are already CE marked and are doing well in their initial European launches," He said. "It's great to see them taking share and even expanding the market there. And as they continue to roll out in Europe and come to the US, we expect both to drive growth for our neuromodulation business."

Medtronic Announces CE Marks: Micra Pacers And Disposable CGM Sensor

To start the new year, Medtronic announced CE marks for its Micra AV2 and Micra VR2 next-generation leadless pacemakers as well as its MiniMed 780G system with Simplera Sync, a disposable, all-in-one continuous glucose monitor (CGM) requiring no fingersticks or overtape.

Micra AV2 and Micra VR2 are the world's smallest pacemakers and provide longer battery life and easier programming than prior versions of the Micra pacemakers. The US Food and Drug Administration approved both devices in May 2023. (Also see "*Minute Insight: Medtronic Counters*

Abbott With New Micra Leadless Pacemakers" - Medtech Insight, 1 May, 2023.)

Simplera Sync offers an improved user experience with two-step insertion process, according to the company. It is about half the size of previous Medtronic sensors.

The company will begin a limited release of MiniMed 780G with Simplera Sync in Europe in the spring of 2024 and then begin the phased commercial launch in Europe in the summer of 2024.

At the J.P. Morgan Health Care Conference in San Francisco, Medtronic CEO Geoff Martha said the company will submit the Simplera Sync to the US Food and Drug Administration for approval in the first half of calendar 2024.

The MiniMed 780G system is currently compatible the Guardian 4 sensor. (Also see "*News We're Watching: Studies Back Nevro Pain Treatment, FTC Blesses Resonetics Nitinol Deal, Genetic Test Identifies Best RDN Patients*" - Medtech Insight, 22 Sep, 2023.)

[Editor's Note: *Check* Medtech Insight *for more updates from Medtronic and other medtech companies presenting at J.P. Morgan as the meeting progresses.*]

Google Commercializes Generative AI Model

Google Research recently introduced MedLM, a group of generative AI models for healthcare.

Last year, the tech giant released *Med-PaLM*, a tuned large-language model that could answer medical questions. It was only released in health care organizations for testing.

The two MedLM models are built on MedPaLM-2. At this stage, Google *recommends* the models for "medical Q&A and summarizations," such as "creation of after-visit summaries or history and physical examination notes."

Google does not consider MedLM to be a medical device, but that is contingent on how customers use it. (Also see "*Chatbots Are Not Ready To Be Medical Devices, Experts Argue*" - Medtech Insight, 7 Jul, 2023.)

Google specifies that "Q&A should only be used for educational purposes and summarization outputs must always be independently reviewed and verified by the user based on their clinical judgment."

Both models are available to Google Cloud customers through Vertex AI, and for preview in specific international markets.

Barnstorming CMR Surgical Records Record Quarter

CMR Surgical, the Cambridge, UK-based developer of Versius, a four-armed, modular surgical robot, said it has achieved both record-level system installations and system use during the last quarter.

Over the course of 2023, its install base has grown 50%, and its procedure volume, 60%.

In total, 17,000 procedures have been performed with Versius, a number that is ever-increasing thanks to CMR Surgical's recent expansions into geographies that include countries in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. (Also see "*Minute Insight: 15,000 Surgeries And More Funding For CMR Surgical*" - Medtech Insight, 21 Sep, 2023.)

Supratim Bose, the relatively-new CEO of CMR said, "This is a tremendously exciting time for CMR and our customers as we see the momentum for Versius ... We are already seeing Versius prove its use in complex surgeries ... and welcome new hospitals in existing and new geographies, so that more patients can benefit from robotic assisted surgery."

The announcement also mentioned new releases in 2024. CMR Surgical has been working on a range of additive products for Versius, including advanced instruments, vision systems and software.

Pragmatic, Readily Available UTI Test Launches In UK

Hot on the tail of the launch of its over-the-counter HIV diagnostic, Newfoundland Diagnostics released another product in collaboration with Rightdose.

The Rightdose Self-Test & Treat App is a dual app-diagnostic platform designed to secure faster care for patients suffering from urinary tract infections. Patients pay £15 for three of Newfoundland's UTI tests, which are shipped to their door.

Based on the result, patients can order antibiotics, if necessary. The medication comes at a further cost of £15.69 and is delivered within 24 hours.

While the overall cost of this is more than it would be on the NHS – the diagnostic is free and a single prescription currently costs £9.65 for those who pay – it is also likely faster.

Rightdose and Newfoundland are banking on patients who are either unable to secure or too busy to attend an appointment to serve as customers.

RTI Surgical Buys Cook Biotech from Cook Group

RTI Surgical, a surgical implant contract development and manufacturing organization with offices in Florida and Germany, will acquire Cook Biotech from privately held *Cook Group*, the companies announced on 8 January.

The deal will expand RTI's portfolio of allograft and xenograft biomaterial products and build a "a platform with a unique breadth of capabilities and access to clinical segments," according to RTI.

RTI expects the deal to close in the first quarter. Terms were not disclosed.

Indiana-based Cook Biotech is known for developing the practical regenerative properties of porcine small intestinal submucosa.

"We are uniquely positioned to become a leading [contract development and manufacturing organization] in regenerative medicine as an innovator of differentiated allograft and xenograft biomaterials, and we look forward to welcoming the Cook Biotech team and leveraging their world-class talents and capabilities in xenograft development and processing to better address patient needs together," said RTI CEO Olivier Visa.

The acquisition is backed by Montagu, RTI's main shareholder, as Montagu increases its investment in the group.

"We are committed to supporting both companies in reaching their full potential by leveraging proven technologies to create a platform for innovation that enables surgeons to better address the unique needs of their patients," said Montagu partner Adrien Sassi.