

## CERNER IS ONE OF THE PIONEER COMPANIES THAT BELIEVES IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF HEALTHCARE



**Dr. Bashar Balish**  
Senior Director and client Leader

**H**OSPITALS Magazine has the pleasure to interview Dr. Bashar Balish, senior director and client leader, and Dr. Yasir Khan, senior physician executive, to discuss Cerner's perspective on digital transformation and the new norms post-COVID-19. Cerner connects people and systems around the world by offering a range of intelligent solutions and tools that support the clinical, financial and operational needs of health care organizations.

### What is digital health and how is it linked to modalities such as electronic health records, mobile health and digital transformation?

**Dr. Khan:** With the prevalence of comprehensive health information technology solutions, these terminologies are being used interchangeably even though they are quite distinct. Digital health is using technology to help improve individuals' health and wellness. It's a



**Dr. Yasir Khan**  
Senior Physician Executive

broad concept covering everything from wearable gadgets to robotic surgeons, from mobile health apps to artificial intelligence. It's a vision of digitally transform health care provision through implementation and democratization of disruptive technologies.

Modern electronic health records (EHRs) like Cerner Millennium® are key enablers for digital health, without which an organization's digital health care transformation vision cannot be accomplished. In addition to providing the latest technology to create solutions that let communities and people engage in their own health, we work with our clients to create a service modernization and quality improvement strategy.

Clinical information flow and its high availability provides the foundation for all other technologies to integrate, synchronize and function seamlessly. Contextual clinical decision support and advanced analytics are essential elements of modern comprehensive electronic

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medical records and are already proving vital for reimagining health and care.

### We know that information technology has revolutionized other industries. Why has the health care industry recognized this at a later stage?

**Dr. Bashar:** Until recently, the health care industry has resisted modernization and the main reason is the complexity and the nature of this industry dealing with people's lives. It is true that health care has been late to the advanced digital world; however, it is taking a very speedy progress. Embracing new technologies, digitalization and automation for a better health management represent the way forward. Using technology innovations has become the way to lead to the desired outcomes with optimal consumer satisfaction. IT is no longer the driver of the process, it is one of the main players, facilitator and the tool to achieve clinical value outcome.

It is just a matter of time where all countries will be adopting and building their health care systems around technology, utilizing it to improve people's lives.

### The latest studies show the different ways countries responded to this pandemic was due to their access to quality data. In your opinion, how accurate is it?

**Dr. Khan:** Yes, it is true, A clear need for better data collection and sharing has been witnessed like never before during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the differences in how governments and health authorities have responded to the pandemic were largely impacted by their ability to access and use data. Relying on a scientific data-backed approach has helped many countries to identify cases earlier, track test results, make decisions, and take action to slow and contain the spread of the disease.

As one can imagine, COVID took health care providers by surprise. Little was known about the disease pattern, its prevention and treatments that will be effective. Providers had to improvise and test various interventions quickly. Health information technology became a key tool to capture the associated data and find

patterns of efficacy. Similarly, data was able to identify high-risk patients earlier so they can be better attended to.

As the health care system became overwhelmed with sick patients, health care provision naturally spilled into community institutions with multiple field facilities commissioned. Data enabled providers to monitor patients remotely through automated intelligent algorithms allowing services to scale up quickly and smoothly. Through faster adoption of new modalities, health care systems are finding new ways to deal with the crisis by creating new services while transforming existing ones.

**Dr. Bashar:** I believe that leveraging data will allow us to improve the quality of care, enable our clinicians to make better decisions and ultimately predict the outcomes of tomorrow. The use of technology to analyze and understand data during this challenging year will transform health care, probably more than in any other industry. I truly believe data will be one of the key drivers in advancing the future of health and care.

Cerner will continue to rely on data to improve our clients' experiences and to support their organizations. We've been using and will continue to use data to navigate the pandemic, develop workflows, tools and content, in addition to applying artificial intelligence and informatics to drive improvements in the health of communities.

### We know that the UAE's COVID-19 strategies are being ranked among the top countries in the world. How have data analytics and artificial intelligence helped in slowing the spread of the disease in many countries?

**Dr. Bashar:** I think the UAE experience is a very good example of the best utilization of IT solutions and data-driven strategy. COVID-19 was a shock to everyone and I don't think anybody was ready to face such a crisis. What sets the UAE apart from many countries is the strong leadership, vision and data governance that the UAE implemented a long time ago. The country established a culture that values the use of data and digital technologies, which



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helped them set a global strategy to track COVID-19 case reports, identify cases early, track test results and evaluate the response of the country to the pandemic.

### Social transformation is key to implement smart health. How has the end user attitude changed towards new health care services?

**Dr. Bashar:** I believe the end user's perception of technology has drastically changed. Today, consumers are embracing digital services in many industries. COVID-19 has shifted gears in the health care industry, where one-to-one physical interactions with physicians are not a necessity in many non-urgent cases. It has reshaped the relationship with the patients, health care providers and the overall health system. Technology will continue to play a crucial role in improving the quality of care as well as preventing and reducing the spread of diseases.

### How do you foresee the future of health care information technology and what are the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Dr. Khan:** A few years from now, we will look back and see a clear distinction between the pre- and post-COVID eras when it comes to modernization of the health care delivery. From a health care information technology perspective, we are truly at a turning point where the industry is primed for disruption and COVID is proving to be the catalyst for change.

Health care providers around the world had to rely on health information technology to

reach out to patients and provide services away from hospitals. They observed that by challenging the established norms, they were able to provide services efficiently and more conveniently. New delivery models emerged that ranged from video appointments to home delivery of medications. Health information technology was able to support this shift towards community-based care while supporting integration of entire health care systems. There is renewed interest in virtual health, personalized care enabled by big data, interoperability and predictive analytics. These will hugely change the way care is delivered around the world.

**Dr. Bashar:** I second Dr Yasir's thoughts. The COVID pandemic has opened new doors for us, including the opportunity to collaborate beyond our region. Every health care organization is dealing with the same problem and has the same end goal of keeping patients at the heart of everything we do. The pandemic is also pushing us to come together and rethink health care delivery, which will create new opportunities to improve health and care and accelerate the next era of transformation.

### Can you tell us about Cerner's vision for health care?

**Dr. Bashar:** Cerner is one of the pioneering companies that believes in the transformation of health care. Our mission to relentlessly seek breakthrough innovation that will shape health care of tomorrow. We focus on people not technology and believe that what we do doesn't just impact health care – it impacts the world.



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