



Re-Shaping Healthcare Workforce Skills in Hospitals to Keep Pace with Health and Technological Transformations

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Abstract

Healthcare delivery is being reshaped by rapid advances in digital health, artificial intelligence (AI), data-intensive clinical decision support, and new models of value-based, patient-centered care. Hospitals sit at the center of these changes and depend on a workforce that can safely integrate technology, collaborate across disciplines, and continuously adapt to evolving clinical and operational demands. However, many hospitals still rely on traditional competency models that prioritize profession-specific technical skills while underemphasizing digital literacy, systems thinking, human factors, and change management. This gap can slow adoption of beneficial innovations, elevate workflow burden, and contribute to staff frustration and burnout. This paper examines the key drivers of health and technological transformation in hospital settings, identifies the emerging competency domains required of modern healthcare professionals, and analyzes barriers that limit skill development at scale. It then proposes a practical, evidence-informed framework for reshaping workforce skills through aligned education pathways, competency-based continuing professional development (CPD), simulation and digital learning ecosystems,



interprofessional practice redesign, and leadership-supported learning culture. The paper concludes that hospitals that invest strategically in workforce capability-building—while protecting time for learning and prioritizing usability and safety in technology deployment—are better positioned to improve patient outcomes, strengthen resilience, and sustain innovation over time.

Keywords- Healthcare workforce; hospital skills; digital literacy; health informatics; artificial intelligence; interprofessional collaboration; change management; patient safety; continuous professional development.

1. Introduction

Hospitals are experiencing an accelerated period of transformation in which clinical excellence is increasingly intertwined with technological competence. Electronic health records (EHRs), computerized provider order entry, digital imaging and laboratory information systems, telehealth, remote monitoring, and algorithmic decision support are now embedded in routine hospital operations. At the same time, hospitals face workforce shortages, rising patient complexity, higher expectations for patient experience, and more stringent demands for quality, safety, and efficiency. These pressures create an urgent need to re-shape healthcare workforce skills so that staff can deliver safe, effective, and person-centered care within fast-evolving sociotechnical environments.

Traditional professional education remains essential for building foundational clinical knowledge and discipline-specific technical competence. However, many health professionals enter practice with limited preparation for working inside complex systems where outcomes emerge from interactions between people, processes, technology, and organizational culture. Digitization changes how information is recorded and shared, how teams coordinate, and how clinical decisions are made. New tools can reduce error and improve continuity when implemented well, but they can also introduce novel risks, such as alert fatigue, automation bias, documentation burden, and usability-related mistakes. Without a deliberate strategy to build skills and redesign workflows, technology can increase workload and create workarounds that undermine safety.

Workforce development is therefore not merely an educational issue; it is a strategic imperative for hospital performance and sustainability. Hospitals that invest in skill transformation are better positioned to implement innovations responsibly, strengthen patient safety, and maintain resilience during shocks such as outbreaks, mass casualty events, or sudden changes in demand. Conversely, hospitals that underinvest in capability-building risk slower innovation uptake, decreased staff satisfaction, and widening disparities between the promise of technology and its real-world impact. This paper examines the drivers of change, identifies emerging competency domains needed in modern hospitals, discusses barriers to



skill transformation, and proposes a practical framework that hospitals can use to build a future-ready workforce.

2. Drivers of Health and Technological Transformation in Hospitals

2.1 Digitization of Clinical Workflows

Digitization has reshaped clinical work by changing how information is captured, accessed, and communicated. EHRs, electronic medication administration records, clinical documentation tools, and digital diagnostic systems can improve legibility, traceability, and coordination. Yet the benefits are not automatic. Poorly configured interfaces can increase cognitive load, prolong documentation time, and contribute to errors through confusing displays, copy-and-paste practices, and miscommunication across fragmented screens. Workforce readiness now includes the ability to navigate digital workflows efficiently, apply safe documentation habits, and understand how data entry decisions influence downstream care, coding, quality metrics, and continuity.

2.2 Data-Intensive Care and Hospital Analytics

Hospitals generate large volumes of data from laboratory systems, imaging platforms, bedside monitors, wearables, staffing systems, and supply-chain tools. Dashboards for sepsis surveillance, infection prevention, bed management, and operational throughput are increasingly common. Data becomes useful only when clinicians and managers can interpret it, question its quality, and integrate it with clinical judgment and context. This creates demand for practical data literacy: knowing how metrics are defined, recognizing missingness or bias, understanding false alarms and trade-offs, and translating numbers into actionable improvement plans.

2.3 Artificial Intelligence, Automation, and Decision Support

AI-enabled tools are expanding across radiology and pathology interpretation support, triage, documentation assistance, patient deterioration prediction, and workflow automation. Automation can improve speed, standardization, and access; however, it can also create hazards through overreliance on outputs, reduced vigilance, and unequal performance across patient groups. Clinicians require 'AI literacy'—a working understanding of what models can and cannot do, how performance is assessed, and how to recognize when outputs may be unreliable. Hospitals also need boundary-spanning roles such as clinical informaticists and digital nurse champions who can translate clinical needs into technical specifications and support safer implementation.

2.4 Changing Patient Demographics and Clinical Complexity

Aging populations and increasing prevalence of chronic disease have intensified multimorbidity, polypharmacy, and complex care pathways. Patients often require multiple



specialties, coordinated diagnostics, and individualized planning that considers functional status, social factors, and patient preferences. These realities elevate the importance of communication skills, shared decision-making, cultural competence, and interprofessional coordination. Technology can support coordination, but only if staff have the skills to use shared tools consistently and align digital documentation with patient-centered goals.

2.5 Quality, Safety, and Regulatory Expectations

Many health systems emphasize value-based care, transparency of outcomes, and patient safety improvement. Accreditation bodies and regulators increasingly expect organizations to demonstrate robust quality management, infection prevention, medication safety, and incident learning processes. This raises demand for skills in quality improvement (QI), measurement, root cause analysis, human factors, and implementation science. Hospitals must build workforce capability not only to follow protocols but also to improve them using structured methods and evidence.

2.6 Workforce Well-Being, Retention, and Resilience Pressures

High workload, emotional strain, and administrative burden contribute to burnout and turnover, threatening care continuity. Technology can be a contributor when it adds clicks, interruptions, or uncertainty. Skill transformation must therefore be paired with workload-sensitive training design, protected time for learning, and a supportive organizational culture. When staff experience development as empowerment—rather than extra burden—hospitals are more likely to retain talent and sustain innovation.

3. Emerging Skill Requirements for the Modern Hospital Workforce

3.1 Digital Literacy and Health Informatics Competence

Digital literacy is now a baseline competency across clinical and operational roles. At a minimum, staff must accurately document care, retrieve information efficiently, use clinical decision support appropriately, and maintain data privacy and cybersecurity hygiene. Beyond basic use, informatics competence includes understanding how information is structured (e.g., problem lists, medication reconciliation, standardized terminologies), recognizing how workflow and interface design influence errors, and contributing to safer system optimization. Hospitals benefit when frontline clinicians can articulate usability problems, participate in configuration decisions, and collaborate with informatics teams to refine order sets, templates, and alerts.

Practical informatics training should address common pitfalls such as copy-forward documentation, indiscriminate alert overriding, and fragmented communication across multiple channels. It should also develop skills in structured handoff documentation, clinical messaging etiquette, and appropriate use of patient portals. Because systems evolve



frequently, hospitals need continuous training models that combine onboarding, refresher modules, and just-in-time coaching during upgrades.

3.2 Data Literacy, Measurement, and Improvement Skills

Modern hospitals increasingly rely on measurement to manage quality and operations. Clinicians and managers therefore need fluency in basic performance metrics, such as process measures (e.g., hand hygiene compliance), outcome measures (e.g., infection rates), and balancing measures (e.g., unintended consequences). Data literacy includes interpreting run charts, distinguishing signal from noise, and understanding the implications of small denominators or coding changes. Importantly, staff must learn to use data as a tool for learning rather than blame, supporting a culture in which reporting and analysis improve systems.

Quality improvement skills—such as Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles, root cause analysis, failure mode and effects analysis, and structured incident debriefing—enable teams to translate insights into sustainable practice changes. When these skills are widely distributed across professions, hospitals can accelerate improvement and reduce reliance on small centralized QI teams.

3.3 Interprofessional Collaboration and Team-Based Care

Hospital care is fundamentally interdependent. Effective outcomes depend on coordinated actions among physicians, nurses, pharmacists, laboratory and radiology professionals, respiratory therapists, physiotherapists, and many others. Teamwork skills include closed-loop communication, psychological safety, role clarity, and respectful escalation when risks are identified. These competencies reduce preventable harm, improve throughput, and support staff well-being by decreasing conflict and duplication.

Interprofessional collaboration is particularly critical in high-risk settings such as emergency departments, intensive care units, operating rooms, and infectious disease outbreak response. Training that combines simulation, structured handoffs (e.g., SBAR), and interdisciplinary case reviews can strengthen shared mental models and reduce errors at transitions of care.

3.4 Human Factors, Patient Safety, and Systems Thinking

Human factors and systems thinking help clinicians understand why errors occur and how to design safer work. Rather than attributing incidents solely to individual performance, systems thinking examines factors such as workload, environment, communication patterns, interface design, and organizational incentives. Safety skills include recognizing latent conditions, reporting near misses, performing structured risk assessments, and participating in learning systems that translate incidents into preventive redesign.



In a technology-rich environment, human factors competence also includes recognizing how alarms, alerts, and automation shape attention and decision-making. Staff must be prepared to manage alert fatigue, avoid complacency when automation performs well, and maintain vigilance when tools behave unexpectedly. These skills are central to safe adoption of AI and automation in hospital settings.

3.5 Adaptability, Lifelong Learning, and Professional Identity in Change

Because clinical knowledge and technologies evolve rapidly, hospitals need staff who can learn continuously. Adaptability includes openness to new workflows, reflective practice, and ability to integrate new evidence into care. Lifelong learning is supported by metacognitive skills such as identifying learning needs, seeking feedback, and using learning resources efficiently. It also requires a professional identity that values improvement and innovation as part of high-quality care.

Hospitals can strengthen adaptability by normalizing learning as a routine component of work, providing access to microlearning modules, and recognizing development achievements. Protected learning time is particularly important for shift-based staff who may otherwise be excluded from education opportunities.

3.6 Leadership, Communication, and Change Management

Change in hospitals is frequent: new policies, technologies, care pathways, and staffing models are continuously introduced. Leadership is therefore required at multiple levels, including unit-based leadership by charge nurses, senior residents, clinical supervisors, and department managers. Essential competencies include coaching, conflict resolution, supportive feedback, and change management skills such as stakeholder engagement, addressing resistance, and monitoring adoption.

Effective leaders also understand the emotional dimensions of change. They communicate the rationale for transformation, listen to concerns, and create conditions in which staff feel safe to ask questions and report problems. In the context of digital transformation, leaders must advocate for usability, align technology with clinical workflows, and ensure that training is realistic and adequately resourced.

3.7 Ethical, Legal, and Equity Competencies in Digital Care

Digital transformation raises ethical and legal issues related to privacy, consent, cybersecurity, algorithmic bias, and equitable access. Staff need to understand data protection principles, appropriate information sharing, and risk mitigation for phishing and credential compromise. For AI tools, ethical competence includes recognizing potential biases, monitoring performance across patient groups, and ensuring that human oversight remains appropriate.



Equity skills also involve ensuring that technology does not exclude vulnerable populations, such as patients with limited digital literacy, language barriers, or limited access to devices. Workforce training should therefore integrate culturally competent communication and inclusive design principles when using portals, telehealth, and automated messaging.

4. Barriers and Challenges in Reshaping Hospital Workforce Skills

4.1 Workforce Shortages and Time Constraints

Hospitals often operate under staffing shortages and high patient volumes, leaving limited capacity for training. When education competes with service delivery, learning is frequently postponed or reduced to compliance-focused modules. This can lead to superficial adoption of new tools and inconsistent practice. Skill transformation requires protected time and staffing models that recognize learning as essential work rather than optional activity.

4.2 Fragmented Training and Inconsistent Competency Standards

Training programs may be fragmented across departments, professions, and vendors. Different units may receive different levels of support for the same technology, and competency expectations may not be aligned across roles. Without shared competency frameworks and clear assessment approaches, hospitals risk uneven performance, local workarounds, and a loss of standardization that is essential for safety.

4.3 Resistance to Change and Low Psychological Safety

Resistance is a predictable response to frequent change, especially when past initiatives have increased workload or failed to deliver benefits. Staff may fear that new technologies will reduce autonomy, expose performance to scrutiny, or disrupt established routines. In environments with low psychological safety, staff may avoid asking questions or reporting problems, which limits learning and makes implementation riskier. Change management and supportive leadership are therefore integral to skill transformation.

4.4 Usability Problems and Technology-Induced Burden

Even well-trained staff can struggle when technology is poorly designed or poorly integrated. Usability issues such as confusing navigation, redundant data entry, excessive alerts, and slow system response create frustration and increase cognitive load. In these contexts, additional training alone will not solve the problem; hospitals must also improve system design, reduce unnecessary documentation, and optimize workflows so that technology supports rather than obstructs care.

4.5 Limited Educational Infrastructure and Funding

Skill transformation requires infrastructure, including simulation facilities, learning management systems, digital training environments, and trained educators. Budget limitations



can restrict access to these resources, particularly when leadership views training as a cost rather than an investment. A sustainable approach links workforce development to measurable outcomes such as reduced adverse events, improved throughput, or improved staff retention, supporting the business case for investment.

4.6 Misalignment Between Education, Regulation, and Practice Needs

Pre-service education, licensing requirements, and hospital practice needs are not always aligned. Educational curricula may underemphasize digital health, interprofessional practice, and improvement methods. Regulatory requirements may focus on documentation rather than competence in safe, efficient digital workflows. Hospitals must therefore collaborate with academic institutions, professional bodies, and policymakers to modernize competency expectations and reduce duplication across training and compliance processes.

5. A Practical Framework for Workforce Skill Transformation in Hospitals

5.1 Establish a Shared Competency Model Aligned to Strategy

Skill transformation begins with clarity about what competencies are required for current and future hospital work. Hospitals can develop a shared competency model that integrates clinical competence with digital literacy, data and improvement skills, teamwork, safety and human factors, and leadership. The model should be tailored to role families (e.g., bedside nursing, physicians, allied health, diagnostic services, managers) while maintaining common cross-cutting domains. Aligning competencies with strategic priorities—such as patient safety, digital transformation, and value-based care—helps ensure that training investments produce organizational value.

Competency models are most effective when they include observable behaviors and clear proficiency levels (e.g., novice, competent, advanced, expert). Hospitals can use these levels to guide onboarding, career progression, and targeted upskilling. Importantly, competencies should be co-designed with frontline staff to ensure relevance and to build ownership.

5.2 Implement Competency-Based Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Traditional continuing education often emphasizes hours completed rather than competence gained. Competency-based CPD focuses on demonstrable performance improvement using assessment, feedback, and reflective practice. In hospitals, this may include structured skill checklists for digital workflows (e.g., medication reconciliation), simulation-based assessments for crisis teamwork, and audits with coaching for documentation quality and safety practices. Competency-based approaches reduce variability and ensure that training translates into real-world performance.

CPD should combine multiple methods: microlearning modules for quick updates, workshops for complex topics, case-based discussions for clinical reasoning, and mentorship for



leadership development. Hospitals can also integrate learning into daily work through brief huddles, safety rounds, and debriefings. When CPD is embedded in workflow, it becomes more sustainable and equitable across shifts.

5.3 Build Digital Learning Ecosystems and Simulation Programs

Digital transformation requires scalable training modalities. Learning management systems can deliver standardized content, track completion, and support adaptive learning pathways. Short, scenario-based modules can teach key workflows such as ordering, documentation, and clinical messaging. Interactive “sandbox” environments that mirror the live EHR allow staff to practice safely without risking patient data. These tools are particularly helpful during system upgrades and new feature rollouts.

Simulation-based education remains critical for high-risk teamwork and human factors skills. In-situ simulations—conducted in real clinical environments—can reveal workflow hazards, communication failures, and equipment issues. Simulation can also support technology adoption by testing new digital workflows under realistic conditions and capturing frontline feedback before full deployment. Combining simulation with debriefing strengthens learning and builds a culture of continuous improvement.

5.4 Strengthen Interprofessional Education and Practice Redesign

Because hospital care is delivered by teams, skill transformation must be interprofessional rather than siloed. Interprofessional education (IPE) develops shared language, role understanding, and collaborative problem-solving. Hospitals can implement IPE through joint onboarding, interdisciplinary simulation, collaborative morbidity and mortality reviews, and shared quality improvement projects. These approaches build mutual trust and reduce errors at transitions of care.

Practice redesign complements education. Hospitals can introduce structured interdisciplinary rounds, standardized handoff tools, and shared care plans in the EHR. When technology supports team workflows—such as shared task lists and transparent documentation—collaboration improves. Redesign should pay attention to workload distribution, ensuring that tasks are assigned to the most appropriate role and that technology does not shift excessive clerical work onto clinicians.

5.5 Develop Workforce Roles for Digital Transformation

Digital transformation benefits from dedicated roles that bridge clinical and technical domains. Clinical informaticists, nurse informatics specialists, physician champions, super-users, and digital pharmacists can provide frontline support, co-design workflows, and help interpret data. These roles can reduce implementation risk by translating user feedback into system improvements and by coaching colleagues during early adoption. Hospitals should



formalize such roles with clear time allocation, training, and career pathways to sustain capacity over time.

Hospitals may also require new competencies in cybersecurity, data governance, and AI oversight. Establishing multidisciplinary governance structures—combining clinicians, IT professionals, quality leaders, and legal and ethics experts—supports responsible technology selection, monitoring, and decommissioning.

5.6 Protect Time for Learning and Create a Learning Culture

Even the best training content will fail without time and psychological conditions for learning. Hospitals should protect time for education, particularly during major technology transitions. This may involve scheduling protected learning sessions, adjusting productivity expectations during go-live periods, and providing backfill coverage. A learning culture encourages questions, treats errors as opportunities for improvement, and values continuous development. Leaders play a critical role by modeling learning behaviors, responding constructively to concerns, and recognizing improvement efforts.

Psychological safety is essential for effective learning. Staff must feel safe to admit uncertainty, ask for help, and report near misses. Hospitals can strengthen psychological safety through respectful communication norms, non-punitive reporting systems, and routine debriefings after challenging cases. These practices also support staff well-being and retention.

5.7 Use Implementation Science and Human Factors in Technology Adoption

Workforce skill transformation should be coordinated with technology implementation using human factors and implementation science principles. Before deploying new tools, hospitals can conduct workflow mapping, usability testing, and risk assessments to identify potential failure points. During rollouts, structured training, coaching, and performance monitoring can help teams adopt safer behaviors. After implementation, continuous measurement and feedback support optimization and reduce unintended consequences such as alert fatigue or documentation overload.

Importantly, hospitals should avoid overreliance on training as the only risk control. When technology is misaligned with workflow, system redesign and simplification are often more effective than additional education. A balanced approach combines user-centered design, process improvement, and competence building.

5.8 Evaluate Outcomes and Sustain Skill Transformation

To sustain workforce transformation, hospitals should evaluate outcomes at multiple levels. At the individual level, assessments can measure competence, confidence, and adoption of desired behaviors. At the team level, measures may include teamwork climate and reliability



of handoffs. At the organizational level, hospitals can track patient safety indicators, technology-related incident reports, throughput metrics, and staff retention.

Evaluation should be used to learn and adjust rather than to punish. When feedback loops are timely and transparent, staff can see the impact of skill development on patient outcomes, strengthening motivation. Sustained transformation also benefits from partnerships with universities and professional bodies to align curricula with hospital competency needs.

6. Implications for Hospital Performance and Patient Care

Reshaping workforce skills supports safer and more effective care by improving the fit between people and the systems in which they work. Digital literacy and informatics competence reduce documentation errors, improve information retrieval, and strengthen continuity across departments. Data literacy and improvement skills enable teams to identify variation, learn from incidents, and sustain evidence-based practice. Teamwork and human factors competence reduce preventable harm in high-risk settings by improving communication and coordination. Leadership and change management skills support adoption of new pathways and technologies while maintaining staff engagement.

Importantly, skill transformation contributes to hospital resilience. When staff can adapt to evolving demands, hospitals are better prepared to respond to surges, disruptions, and new clinical threats. Workforce development also supports retention by enhancing professional growth and reducing frustration associated with poorly supported technology. Over time, these factors can translate into improved patient outcomes, reduced costs associated with adverse events and turnover, and stronger public trust.

7. Future Directions

Future workforce strategies should anticipate emerging technologies and evolving models of care. Hospitals will likely expand the use of AI for decision support, automation of routine documentation, and predictive analytics for operational planning. As these tools mature, competency frameworks should include AI governance, monitoring for bias and drift, and skills for maintaining human oversight. Research is needed to identify which training methods most effectively translate into safe real-world adoption, particularly across diverse clinical contexts.

Hospital leaders and policymakers should also strengthen alignment between pre-service education and practice needs. Partnerships with universities can embed digital health, interprofessional practice, and improvement science into curricula. National standards for informatics and digital competencies can reduce variability and support mobility of the workforce. Finally, evaluation should include equity outcomes to ensure that technology and training benefit all patient groups and do not widen disparities.



8. Conclusion

Health and technological transformations are redefining how hospitals deliver care and what skills healthcare professionals need. Re-shaping workforce skills requires more than short-term training; it demands a coordinated approach that aligns competency models, education pathways, digital learning ecosystems, interprofessional practice redesign, and leadership-supported learning culture. Hospitals that invest in capability-building—while improving usability and protecting time for learning—are better positioned to implement innovation safely, strengthen patient outcomes, and sustain resilience in a rapidly changing healthcare environment.

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