

A MCKELLAR INSTITUTE REPORT

The Future of Work in Healthcare & Life Sciences

Building AI capability for what comes next



McKellar
Institute

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FOREWORD

AI literacy is becoming professional literacy.

Across healthcare, life sciences and global health, organisations are redefining roles, workflows and skill requirements. Professionals who understand and use AI will be best positioned for what comes next.



AI does not replace professional knowledge. Across every domain this report examines, the advantage consistently comes from combining domain expertise with AI capability — not substituting one for the other. That combination is what this report is about: what leading research says is changing, what employers are already looking for, and what it means for healthcare, pharmaceutical, clinical research, health systems and health economics professionals specifically.

“The next generation of health professionals will be defined not by whether they use AI, but by how well they use it, responsibly.”

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In this report

- The evidence: what leading research organisations are finding about AI and the workforce
- Why AI capability matters for your career, earning potential and job security
- What employers are looking for, today
- Sector-by-sector insights across healthcare, pharma, public health and health economics
- Domain spotlights on how specific workflows are changing, field by field

THE EVIDENCE

Leading organisations agree: AI is reshaping professional work.

From global health agencies to top consultancies, the message is clear. AI is transforming how work gets done — and professionals need new skills to stay relevant and make a greater impact.

70%

of employers expect most employees to use AI tools in their work by 2027.

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

67%

of healthcare executives believe AI will significantly change workforce skills in the next 5 years.

DELOITTE

75%

of life sciences leaders say AI skills will be essential for future talent.

MCKINSEY & COMPANY

62%

of organisations cite AI literacy as a key factor in future hiring and promotion decisions.

LINKEDIN WORKPLACE LEARNING



Why AI capability matters

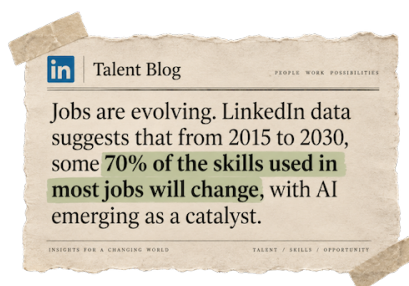
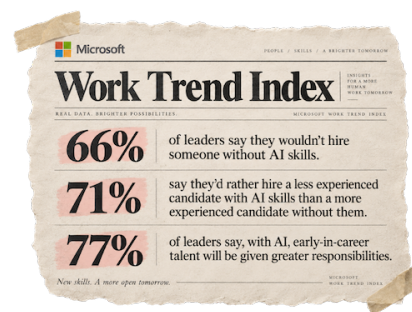
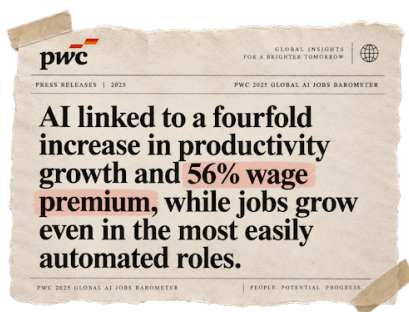
AI does not replace professional knowledge. The real advantage comes from combining domain expertise with AI capability — that combination is where professionals create the most value, and where the research below shows the reward is greatest.

“AI won’t replace you. A professional who understands AI will.”

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Don’t take our word for it

PwC’s 2025 Global AI Jobs Barometer found that workers with advanced AI skills commanded a **56% wage premium** compared with workers in similar roles without those skills — linked to a fourfold increase in productivity growth, with jobs growing even in the most easily automated roles. The headlines from 2025’s leading workplace research make the same point.



“Across every major workforce study published in the past year, the pattern is the same: AI fluency is moving from a competitive advantage to a baseline expectation.”

THE TAKEAWAY

WHAT EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING FOR

AI is changing role expectations.

Employers increasingly value professionals who can:

Use AI tools effectively

Apply AI in real-world professional tasks

Combine domain expertise with AI

Apply AI within a professional context

Critically evaluate outputs

Verify and validate AI-generated information

Communicate and collaborate

Work effectively in AI-enabled teams

Integrate AI into workflows

Improve efficiency and decision-making

Adapt to new ways of working

Stay flexible as tools and roles evolve

Understand risk and ethics

Use AI responsibly and safely

Drive better outcomes

Use AI to create value for people and organisations



“The most valuable professionals of the future combine domain expertise with AI capability.”

FOR EMPLOYERS

Organisations are seeking professionals who can apply AI in context, exercise judgement, and contribute to meaningful outcomes.

EXPLORE INSIGHTS BY SECTOR

AI is changing every field differently.

Healthcare

AI is moving from individual tools into everyday healthcare workflows.

Healthcare organisations are adopting AI to support clinical decision-making, analyse complex information and automate administrative work. The shift is less about replacing professionals — and more about augmenting what they can do.

Human + AI

The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025 names healthcare among the industries where human–technology collaboration will matter most as work changes.

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM, 2025

- **AI-supported decision-making.** Working with AI recommendations, predictions and summaries — not just manually assembled information.
- **More intelligent workflows.** Administrative and analytical tasks accelerate, freeing time for judgement and patient-facing work.
- **Human + AI collaboration.** The emerging model is collaboration, not simple automation.
- **Scrutiny of responsible use.** Accuracy, bias, privacy — and knowing when human judgement must override AI.

The healthcare professional of the future is unlikely to succeed through technical knowledge alone. The advantage comes from combining clinical expertise with the ability to use, question and supervise AI effectively.

Key sources: OECD, *Artificial Intelligence and the Health Workforce (2024)* · World Economic Forum, *Future of Jobs Report 2025* · WHO, *Competency Frameworks and Standards for Digital Health (2026)*

Pharma & Life Sciences

AI is beginning to reshape the pharmaceutical value chain.

From discovery and clinical development to pharmacovigilance, regulatory and commercial work, AI is being used to analyse scientific information, generate content and accelerate knowledge-intensive processes.

\$60–110B

McKinsey estimates generative AI could create this much annual value across pharma and medical products — yet only 32% of leaders have begun scaling it, and just 5% see consistent competitive value.

MCKINSEY & COMPANY, 2024

- **Scientific information at scale.** AI rapidly searches, classifies and synthesises scientific, clinical and regulatory information.
- **Faster knowledge work.** Literature review, drafting, extraction and comparison become AI-assisted.
- **From pilots to workflows.** Value comes from redesigned workflows — not isolated experiments.
- **Higher verification expectations.** Regulated environments demand accuracy, traceability and human oversight.

The greatest value won't come from simply knowing how to use an AI tool. It comes from combining deep pharmaceutical expertise with the judgement to apply AI safely, efficiently and at scale.

Key sources: McKinsey & Company, *Generative AI in the Pharmaceutical Industry (2024)* · McKinsey & Company, *Scaling Gen AI in the Life Sciences Industry (2025)*

EXPLORE INSIGHTS BY SECTOR, CONTINUED

Public Health

Public health intelligence is becoming faster, broader and data-driven.

Public health teams make sense of information from many sources — surveillance systems, epidemiological datasets, scientific literature and emerging digital streams. AI is changing how quickly and widely that intelligence can be gathered.

Collaborative surveillance

WHO's vision for epidemic and pandemic surveillance combines traditional approaches with newer capabilities and information sources to strengthen preparedness and response.

WHO, 2023

- **Earlier intelligence.** AI surfaces unusual patterns, signals and risks faster than manual review alone.
- **Faster evidence synthesis.** AI supports literature review, summarisation and interrogating large volumes of information.
- **More predictive approaches.** Forecasting, risk stratification and scenario analysis join traditional methods.
- **A broader data environment.** Conventional surveillance combines with diverse digital and real-world data.

AI can accelerate analysis, but public health decisions still depend on context, epidemiological judgement, equity and human accountability.

Key sources: WHO, Future Surveillance for Epidemic and Pandemic Diseases (2023) · WHO, Competency Frameworks and Standards for Digital Health (2026) · OECD, Scaling Artificial Intelligence in Health (2026)

Health Economics

AI is changing how evidence is generated, analysed and modelled.

Health economics and outcomes research is particularly suited to AI: much of the work involves large datasets, evidence synthesis, statistical analysis and economic modelling.

#1

ISPOR placed Artificial Intelligence first in its 2026–2027 Top 10 HEOR Trends — ahead of real-world evidence — reflecting its growing importance to health economics and healthcare decisions.

ISPOR, 2026–2027

- **Faster evidence synthesis.** AI assists with screening literature, extracting information and synthesising evidence.
- **AI-assisted modelling.** Model conceptualisation, programming, quality assessment, sensitivity analysis and reporting.
- **More powerful real-world data.** Machine learning finds relationships traditional approaches may miss.
- **Validation matters more, not less.** AI-generated models can contain errors — expert review is essential.

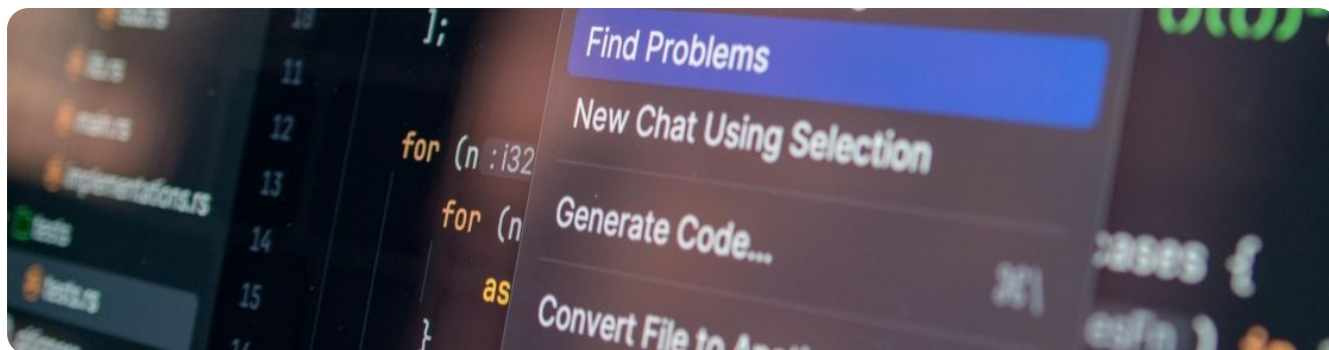
AI could substantially reduce repetitive analytical work, freeing health economists to focus on interpretation, assumptions, uncertainty and value.

Key sources: ISPOR, 2026–2027 Top 10 HEOR Trends · ISPOR / Value in Health, Generative AI in HEOR and HTA research · ISPOR research on AI-assisted economic modelling

DOMAIN SPOTLIGHT

See how AI is changing your field.

AI is reshaping how work gets done across healthcare, pharmaceuticals, research and the wider health economy. The next few pages look field by field.



DOMAIN SPOTLIGHT

Public Health



From retrospective analysis to real-time population intelligence.

TODAY

- Manually reviewing surveillance reports and literature
- Producing situation reports on a fixed reporting cycle
- Cross-referencing datasets by hand

WITH AI CAPABILITY

- AI surfaces emerging signals and anomalies faster
- Forecasting and scenario modelling support planning
- Evidence synthesis across far larger volumes of information

SKILLS YOU WILL NEED

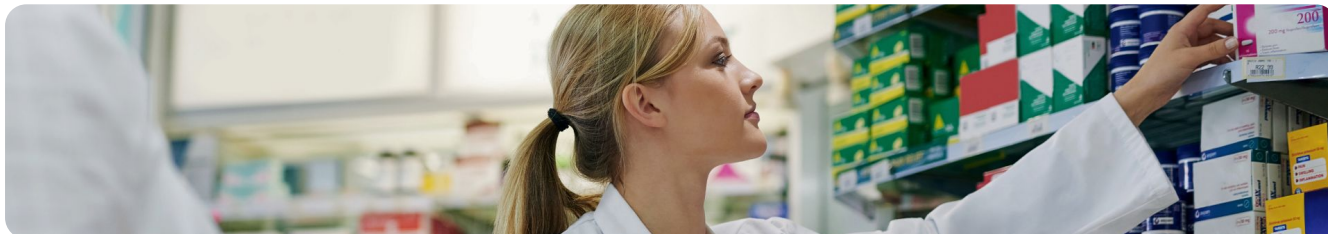
AI and digital literacy

Epidemiological data interpretation

Bias, ethics and responsible AI use

DOMAIN SPOTLIGHT

Pharmaceuticals



From fragmented processes to faster, intelligence-led decision-making.

TODAY

- Manually screening scientific and regulatory literature
- Drafting and reviewing documents largely by hand
- Siloed knowledge work across discovery, safety and regulatory teams

WITH AI CAPABILITY

- AI accelerates literature review, drafting and extraction
- Regulated workflows are redesigned around AI assistance, not just piloted
- Faster, more consistent knowledge work at scale

SKILLS YOU WILL NEED

Generative AI and tool fluency

Critical verification of AI-generated content

Responsible AI in regulated environments

DOMAIN SPOTLIGHT

Clinical Research



From manual trial processes to intelligent, data-enabled research.

TODAY

- Manually screening and extracting data from trial documents
- Slow, largely manual literature and evidence review
- Fragmented data across systems and sites

WITH AI CAPABILITY

- AI-assisted screening, extraction and evidence synthesis
- Faster identification of relevant studies and patterns
- More consistent, better-documented research workflows

SKILLS YOU WILL NEED

AI-assisted evidence synthesis

Data and information literacy

Quality assurance and human oversight

DOMAIN SPOTLIGHT

Health Systems



From operational complexity to smarter, more responsive health services.

TODAY

- Reactive operational management with lagging data
- Manually assembled performance and capacity reports
- Slow response to emerging operational pressure

WITH AI CAPABILITY

- AI-supported dashboards surface issues as they emerge
- Predictive capacity and demand planning
- Faster, more informed operational decision-making

SKILLS YOU WILL NEED

Workflow integration

Data interpretation and visualisation

Change leadership in AI-enabled teams

DOMAIN SPOTLIGHT

Health Economics



From static analysis to faster, more dynamic health intelligence.

TODAY

- Manually building and validating economic models
- Time-intensive literature and evidence screening
- Long lead times between analysis and decision

WITH AI CAPABILITY

- AI assists model conceptualisation, programming and reporting
- Faster evidence synthesis frees time for interpretation
- Machine learning surfaces patterns traditional methods may miss

SKILLS YOU WILL NEED

Health-economic modelling with AI

Validation and reproducibility

Responsible and transparent AI use

BUILDING THE CAPABILITY

The McKellar Belt System

Every insight in this report points to the same conclusion: the professionals who thrive will be the ones who combine what they already know with practical, responsible AI capability. McKellar's certification pathways build that capability progressively, one level at a time.

W

White Belt — Foundation

Understand what AI is, and where it fits in your profession.

Y

Yellow Belt — Practitioner

Apply AI tools confidently within your own workflows.

G

Green Belt — Specialist

Integrate and evaluate AI use across more complex, real-world tasks.

B

Black Belt — Leader

Lead the responsible adoption of AI within a team or organisation.

“AI does not replace professional expertise. It changes what professionals can do with it.”

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

About McKellar Institute

McKellar Institute is a professional AI certification provider, helping working professionals across healthcare, life sciences and the wider health economy build practical, responsible AI capability around the expertise they already have. Certification progresses through four levels — White, Yellow, Green and Black Belt — from foundational understanding through to leading AI adoption within a team or organisation.

Sources cited in this report

PwC, 2025 Global AI Jobs Barometer

World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report 2025

LinkedIn Talent Blog / LinkedIn Workplace Learning Report

Microsoft Work Trend Index

Indeed Hiring Lab

Deloitte, workforce and AI research

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WHO, Future Surveillance for Epidemic and Pandemic Diseases (2023); Competency Frameworks and Standards for Digital Health (2026)

ISPOR, 2026–2027 Top 10 HEOR Trends; Generative AI in HEOR and HTA research

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