

UK announces £100m AI Life Sciences Accelerator Mission

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Press release

New £100 million fund to capitalise on AI's game-changing potential in life sciences and healthcare

A new mission announced by the Prime Minister will accelerate the use of AI in life sciences to tackle the biggest health challenges of our generation.

From:

Department for Science, Innovation and Technology , Department of Health and Social Care , The Rt Hon Michelle Donelan , The Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP and The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP

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A new mission announced by the Prime Minister will accelerate the use of AI in life sciences to tackle the biggest health challenges of our generation.

In a speech on Thursday, the Prime Minister announced that a £100 million in new government investment will be targeted towards areas where rapid deployment of AI has the greatest potential to create transformational breakthroughs in treatments for previously incurable diseases. The AI Life Sciences Accelerator Mission will capitalise on the UK's unique strengths in secure health data and cutting-edge AI .

The Life Sciences Vision encompasses 8 critical healthcare missions that government, industry, the NHS, academia and medical research charities will work together on at speed to solve – from cancer treatment to tackling dementia.

The £100 million will help drive forward this work by exploring how AI could address these conditions, which have some of the highest mortality and morbidity.

For example, AI could further the development of novel precision treatments for dementia. This new government funding for AI will help us harness the UK's world-class health data to quickly identify those at risk of dementia and related conditions, ensure that the right patients are taking part in the right trials at the right time to develop new treatments effectively, and give us better data on how well new therapies work. By using the power of AI to support the growing pipeline of new dementia therapies, we will ensure the best and most promising treatments are selected to go forwards, and that patients receive the right treatments that work best for them.

AI driven technologies are showing remarkable promise in being able to diagnose, and potentially treat, mental ill health. For example, leading companies are already using conversational AI that supports people with mental health challenges and guides them through proactive prevention routines, escalating cases to human therapists when needed – all of which reduces the strain on NHS waiting lists.

This funding will help us to invest in parts of the UK where the clinical needs are greatest to test and trial new technologies within the next 18 months. Over the next 5 years, we will transform mental health research through developing world-class data infrastructure to improve the lives of those living with mental health conditions.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said:

AI can help us solve some of the greatest social challenges of our time. AI could help find novel dementia treatments or develop vaccines for cancer.

That's why today we're investing a further £100 million to accelerate the use of AI on the most transformational breakthroughs in treatments for previously incurable diseases.

Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology Michelle Donelan said:

This £100 million Mission will bring the UK's unique strengths in secure health data and cutting-edge AI to bear on some of the most pressing health challenges facing the society.

Safe, responsible AI will change the game for what it's possible to do in healthcare, closing the gap between the discovery and application of innovative new therapies, diagnostic tools, and ways of working that will give clinicians more time with their patients.

Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay said:

Cutting-edge technology such as AI is the key to both improving patient care and supporting staff to do their jobs and we are seeing positive impacts across the NHS.

This new accelerator fund will help us build on our efforts to harness the latest technology to unlock progress and drive economic growth.

This is on top of the progress we have already made on AI deployment in the NHS, with AI tools now live in over 90% of stroke networks in England - halving the time for stroke victims to get the treatment in some cases, helping to cut waiting times.

Building on the success of partnerships already using AI in areas like identifying eye diseases, industry, academia and clinicians will be brought together to drive forward novel AI research into earlier diagnosis and faster drug discovery.

The government will invite proposals bringing together academia, industry and clinicians to develop innovative solutions.

This funding will target opportunities to deploy AI in clinical settings and improve health outcomes across a range of conditions. It will also look to fund novel AI research which has the potential to create general purpose applications across a range of health challenges – freeing up clinicians to spend more time with their patients.

This supports work the government is already doing across key disease areas. Using AI to tackle dementia, for example, builds on our commitment to double dementia research funding by 2024, reaching a total of £160 million a year. Our Dame Barbara Windsor Dementia Mission is at the heart of this, enabling us to accelerate dementia research and give patients the access to the exciting new wave of medicines being developed.

Notes to editors

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