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Health Systems Initiative

HSI Newsletter: February 2026

In this issue, we report on the [poster session](#) presentations by this year's Healthcare Lab teams. Healthcare Lab is a required course for the Healthcare Certificate, and the team project focuses on a semester-long engagement with an external company or organization.

We're also happy to share an overview of the [HSI Research Fund](#), spotlighting several projects and the impact of the research we've funded.

Finally, there are two [HSI Lunchtime Seminars](#) coming up.

On February 11, [Jason Helgerson](#) will present "Medicaid Transformation, Value-Based Care, and the Future of Population Health: Perspectives of a Former Medicaid Director." This seminar reviews [New York State's DSRIP program](#), showing how value-based care, provider integration, and investments in primary care and social determinants can improve quality while reducing avoidable hospital use.

For more information and for in-person or Zoom registration for the February 11 seminar, click [here](#).

On March 2, [Shani Fargun](#), VP Healthcare at [StackAI](#), will present "Unsexy AI That Works: A Practical Session on Building Real-World Healthcare AI Workflows with StackAI." Fargun states that most healthcare AI headlines focus on breakthrough and predictive models, but the biggest impact often comes from "unsexy AI": automating tasks such as triage, outreach, documentation, and claims workflows that teams perform every day.

For more information and for in-person or Zoom registration for the March 2 seminar, click [here](#).

Also under [Events](#), we are pleased to announce the upcoming [Sloan Healthcare and Bioinnovations Conference](#), scheduled for February 27th, 2026. Once again, we are cosponsoring this event.

As always, if you have any questions or suggestions, please contact us at healthsystems@mit.edu.

NEWS

MIT Sloan HSI Research Fund: Supporting Pioneering Healthcare Solutions

At MIT Sloan, we tackle healthcare's biggest challenges armed with our strengths in analytics, operations, and incentives. The Health Systems Initiative (HSI) professors connect with industry leaders, public health experts, researchers, and students to deliver real-world improvements in health and lower costs. HSI projects focus on evidence-based action research that can make a difference right now.



The HSI Research Fund is the engine that makes this work possible. It provides critical support and seed funding for innovative projects that address timely healthcare issues. Since its launch in 2019, the Fund has enabled 26 projects with over \$1.9 million in philanthropic support, primarily to procure crucial research data and to fund MIT student stipends for hands-on research with faculty. Many project teams also include collaborations with healthcare organizations and academic partners.

Impact Highlights

- More than 30 peer-reviewed papers were published in the past year, with HSI researchers featured in outlets like *Science Magazine* and *Scientific Inquirer*.
- New teaching cases developed on AI for healthcare decision support and organizational processes are now used in MIT Sloan classrooms and at other universities.

- Collaborations with UMass Memorial Hospital, SilverCloud by Amwell, Oregon Health Authority, and the US Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network.
- Toolkit created for workplace health committees to help them redesign work to improve worker wellbeing.
- Briefings delivered to the US Department of Labor, state regulators, and members of Congress.
- Dozens of MIT students have gained hands-on research experience, gathered material for their dissertations, and are contributing to publications, case studies, and real-world solutions.

Recent Project Spotlights

- **Food-as-Medicine Program:** [Joseph Doyle](#) and colleagues evaluated healthy meal interventions for patients with diabetes, finding modest health improvements and highlighting the need for further research on the role of nutrition programs in improving health outcomes.
- **MRI Resource Optimization:** [Georgia Perakis](#) and her team are helping UMass Memorial Hospital assess expanding MRI services to reduce patient backlog while balancing cost and access.
- **Safer Opioid Prescribing:** [Catherine Tucker](#) and postdoc [Nan Clement](#) studied Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs) and found that interoperability across states leads to safer prescribing and less doctor shopping.
- **Drug Development Efficiency:** [Mert Demirer](#) is quantifying how pharmaceutical firms' portfolios affect drug development costs and success rates.
- **Warehouse Work and Worker Wellbeing:** [Erin Kelly](#) and colleagues are investigating how work redesign may improve workers' health and wellbeing through a cluster-randomized trial of workplace interventions. To date, they have shown lower psychological distress and lower turnover at intervention sites. They are continuing with additional analyses.
- **Optimizing a digital mental health platform:** [Rahul Mazumder](#) and Ph.D. candidate [Brian Liu](#) are collaborating with an industry leader on research to understand how to improve patient success rates.

2025 Funded Projects

- [Ben Vatter](#): Improving risk adjustment in Medicare Advantage to reduce costs and improve access.
- [Catherine Tucker](#): Investigating AI-enabled medical devices and the impact of privacy regulations on innovation.
- [Chara Podimata](#): Using Large Language Models to identify and reduce bias in mental health care.
- [Georgia Perakis](#): Developing AI-based decision support for patient assignment at UMass Medical Center.
- [Tom Kochan](#): Studying labor-management collaboration on AI adoption to improve job quality and patient outcomes.
- [Tong Liu](#): Modeling the role of brokers in employer-sponsored health insurance markets to inform policy.

HSI projects deliver solutions that help healthcare organizations cut costs, improve efficiency, and enhance patient care, which creates lasting partnerships and real change. For more information about the Fund or to collaborate with HSI, please write to healthsystems@mit.edu.

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Healthcare Lab Teams' Presentations Address Real-World Challenges

On January 30, 2026, seven [Healthcare Lab](#) teams presented their recommendations to the challenges posed by their host organizations. This year's hosts ranged from healthcare providers (Boston Children's Hospital, Lahey Hospital and Medical Center, and Cardiovascular Associates of America) to large and small companies (RhythmX AI, CVS Health Ventures, and Surgicure) to a public-private partnership, CHAI (the Coalition for Health AI).



[BCH](#): Maximizing Surgical Block Utilization

[CHAI](#): Governing AI in Healthcare: Bridging the Gap Between Principle and Practice

[CVAUSA](#): Heartbeat Health-Enabled Cardiology Intake Expansion

[CVS Health Ventures](#): Investing in AI for Payer-Provider Transformation

[Lahey](#): Evaluating Technology to Scale Hospital at Home

[RhythmX AI](#): Specialty ROI Model Development

[Surgicure Technologies](#): Toward Accelerated Paths for Commercializing Medical Innovation

Healthcare Lab is a required course for the Healthcare Certificate, and the team project focuses on a semester-long engagement with an external company or organization. Team members gain insights into real-world challenges through working with senior healthcare leaders. They aim to offer actionable recommendations to help organizations make progress on a critical issue.

As in previous years' project presentations, each team had 60 seconds to present their work and pitch to encourage audience members to attend their breakout session. Audience members also voted on which pitch was the funniest, the most likely to entice visitors, and the most surprising. This year, the winners, in order, were CHAI, BCH, and Lahey.

Several of the organizations' hosts attended the presentations and complimented their teams' efforts. BCH, Lahey, and Surgicure are repeat Healthcare Lab hosts. Project teams for those organizations can build on previous work to advance the company's mission. [Irena King](#), CEO and founder of Surgicure, commented, "This year's project builds naturally on last year's work by moving from problem identification to practical application. The strength of the team has been its diversity, bringing together industry veterans, PhD researchers, and students with global perspectives. They've operated as a true extension of our team, constructively challenging assumptions and grounding big ideas in real-world constraints."

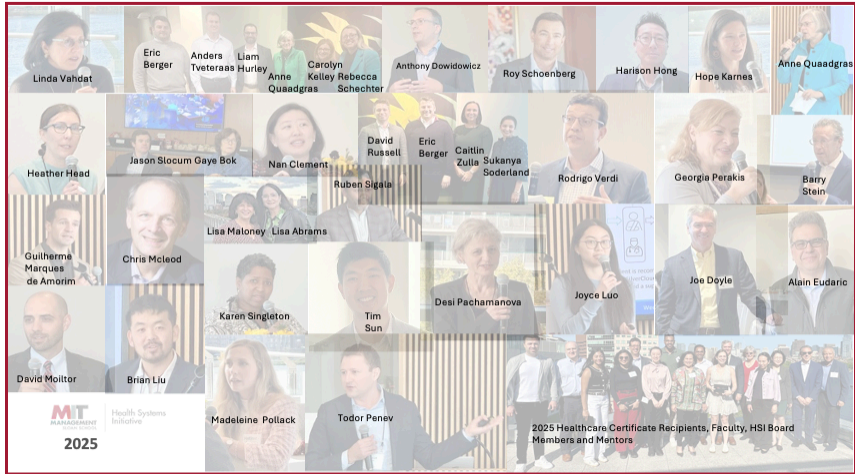
Learn more about all of the teams' projects from their [presentation posters](#).

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Thank you for being a part of HSI

seminars. We'd like to thank all of you for being a part of the HSI.

Some of the many people are pictured below. We look forward to an exciting and productive 2026.



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EVENTS

Upcoming HSI Lunchtime Seminars

Medicaid Transformation, Value-Based Care, and the Future of Population Health: Perspectives of Former Medicaid Director, [Jason Helgerson](#)

In person or on Zoom
E62-450, 100 Main Street, Cambridge, MA
Lunch will be provided in person. Email [Lisa Maloney](#) with any dietary concerns.



Registration on [Sloan Groups](#).

This seminar reviews [New York State's DSRIP program](#), showing how value-based care, provider integration, and investments in primary care and social determinants can improve quality while reducing avoidable hospital use.

It also examines emerging opportunities and risks in healthcare analytics and AI, offering practical lessons for population health transformation and future system design.

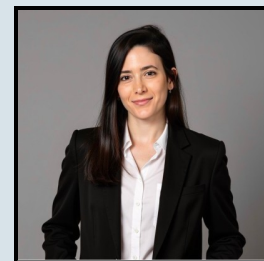
Speaker Bio: [Jason](#) founded [Helgerson Solutions Group](#) and serves as its Chief Executive Officer, leading the firm's mission of making the world a better place. An eternal optimist, Jason believes in new, innovative approaches to solving complex problems in health and social care. Jason also leads the firm's portfolio of venture capital and private equity advising, as well as engaging in international comparative work, bringing the best ideas to change-makers across the globe.

Prior to his move to HSG, Jason was a nationally recognized leader in healthcare and delivery system reform. Most recently, he was New York State's Medicaid Director, a role he held for over seven years. Prior to his service to New York, Jason was Wisconsin's Medicaid Director.

Unsexy AI That Works: A Practical Session on Building Real-World Healthcare AI Workflows with StackAI presented by StackAI VP Healthcare, [Shani Fargun](#), Sloan MBA '25

Monday, March 2, 2026, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM EST

In person or on Zoom
E62-350, 100 Main Street, Cambridge, MA
Lunch will be provided in person. Email [Lisa Maloney](#) with any dietary concerns.



Registration on [Sloan Groups](#).

Participants should bring their laptops and create a StackAI account on their website before the seminar. Instructions sent after registration.

Most healthcare AI headlines focus on breakthrough and predictive models, but the biggest impact often comes from "unsexy AI": automating tasks such as triage, outreach, documentation, and claims workflows that teams perform every day. This is a practical session where we'll share a framework that works in real life, how to choose the right use case, define success metrics, and design an agent workflow that can handle messy inputs like PDFs, faxes, and call notes. We will practice StackAI hands-on and briefly share lessons from building AI Agents in this no-code agent workflow platform founded by two MIT PhDs, along with what we've learned deploying in regulated environments.

Speaker Bio: [Shani Fargun](#) is VP of Healthcare at StackAI, where she leads strategy and go-to-market for AI agent workflow automation in healthcare. She brings cross-sector experience across payers, providers, and medical devices, with a focus on deploying compliant AI systems that reduce operational burden and improve

Announcing the Annual MIT Sloan Healthcare and BioInnovations Conference

Reshaping Healthcare in the Face of Disruption: Exploring Groundbreaking Developments Across the Healthcare Landscape

February 27, 2026 | MIT Media Lab



The MIT Sloan Healthcare & BioInnovations Conference is an annual event that brings together industry, academic, investment, and policy leaders from across the healthcare ecosystem to discuss key issues in healthcare.

Four keynote speakers will be featured:

Alastair Bell, MD, MBA, President & CEO | Boston Medical Center

Julie Kim, CEO-Elect | Takeda

Vasant (Vas) Narasimhan, M.D., CEO | Novartis

Patrick Gilligan, President and CEO | Point32Health

For more information and tickets, please go to the [SHBC home page](#).

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