

# BAPA

Bangladeshi-American Pharmacists' Association

- HOW AI IS IMPACTING OUR HEALTH: TRANSFORMING MEDICINE AND WELLNESS IN THE 21ST CENTURY AND BEYOND
- BANGLADESH'S DRUG POLICY NEEDS MAJOR REPAIR

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 LEETU MOHAMMED ZAMAN



# Departed Souls

*We deeply regret and mourn the departure of our fellow friends.  
We miss them a lot and remember them in our prayers.  
In this day of the Convention we will miss their presence.*

Nazir Ahmed  
Khurshid Anwar  
Mohammad Azim  
Mohammed Hakim Bhuiyan  
Manju Biswas  
Utpal Kanti Biswas  
Amanullah Chowdhury  
Mohammad Jamshed Chowdhury  
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Enayet Karim  
Abdul Mannan Khan  
Kamrul Khan  
Muzammel Khan  
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Muhammad Enamul Malik  
Mohammed Wahidur Rahman  
Shahidur Rahman (Khokon)  
Dr. Rashid  
Abdullah Al Sad  
Mohammad Sikandar

*Disclaimer: If we missed anybody's name it is an unintentional mistake.*

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**FRIDAY-SUNDAY (OCTOBER 11, 12, 13) 2024**

**MYSTIC MARRIOTT HOTEL AND SPA**  
 625 N Rd. Groton, CT 06340

BAPA CONVENTION SCHEDULE AT-A-GLANCE (Offering 8 continuing education credits this year)

Day 1	Friday, October 11, 2024
2:00 PM - 7:00 PM	Registration Mystic Foyer
9:30 PM - 11:59 PM	Cultural Program by BAPA Family Marriot Salon AB
Day 2	Saturday, October 12, 2024
8:00 AM - 2:00 PM	Registration Mystic Foyer
10:00 AM - 1:00 PM	<b>Compliance Update For Pharmacist Do’s and Don’ts</b> 0042-9999-24-061-L03-P, <b>0.3 CEU</b> James R Schiffer, RPh, Esq Mystic Salons A & D
11:00 AM - 12:00 noon	MEDIATION/WELLNESS WORKSHOP Mindfulness 101 Dr, Nafisa Islam, RPh Conference Room 2
1:00 PM - 2:30 PM	<b>Lunch</b> Mystic Salons B,C,E,F
2:30 PM - 5:30 PM	<b>Coronary Artery Disease: Pathophysiology-Pharmacotherapy Prevention and Clinical Management</b> Mr. Kazi Anam, M.S. RPh FASCP ND CH CI 0042-9999-24-069-I01-P, <b>0.3 CEU</b> Mystic Salons A & D

EDITORIAL

3:00 PM - 4:30 PM      CoffeeBreak  
Mystic Foyer

7:30 PM - 9:00 PM      **Dinner**  
Mystic Salons B,C,E,F

9:00 PM - 11:59 PM      Cultural Program  
Salons B,C,E,F

**Day 3**

**Sunday, October 13, 2024**

8:30 AM - 10:30 AM      Breakfast  
Mystic Salons B,C,E,F

9:00 AM - 11:00AM      **GLP-1 Agonist Breakthroughs: Translating Science  
Into Clinical Practice**  
0142-9999-24-068-L01-P, **0.2 CEU**  
Ilora Rafique, MD, MPH  
Mystic Salons A & D

10:00 AM - 11:00 AM      **Nutrition, Habits and Disease Prevention**  
**Dr, Nafisa Islam, RPh**  
Conference Room 2

**PRAYER ROOM IS IN CONFERENCE ROOM 1**



## Message from the PRESIDENT



Dr. Sharmin Haq

*Dear BAPA Members,*

*As the President of the Bangladesh American Pharmacist Association, I am honored to lead an organization dedicated to advancing the role of pharmacists within our community. Our mission is to empower Bangladeshi-American pharmacists through education, professional development, and collaboration, fostering excellence in patient care and healthcare leadership. Through this journal, we aim to promote innovation, share knowledge, and highlight the critical contributions of our members to both the local and global healthcare landscape. Together, we will continue to advocate for the profession, uphold ethical standards, and serve as a vital resource for pharmacists at every stage of their career.*

*Sincerely,*

**Dr. Sharmin Haq**

*President, BAPA*

## Message from the VICE PRESIDENT



Rafi Reyaseat

*As Vice President of the Bangladesh American Pharmacist Association, I am committed to supporting and enhancing the vision of our organization by fostering collaboration and innovation among our members.*

*My focus is on creating opportunities for professional growth, advocating for the evolving role of pharmacists, and ensuring that our community is recognized for its leadership in patient care and healthcare advancement.*

*A key goal of mine is to introduce and integrate BAPA to the younger generation of Bangladeshi pharmacists, inspiring them to take on leadership roles and contribute to the future of healthcare. Together, we will build on the foundation of excellence, champion the values of our profession, and continue to make impactful contributions to the health and well-being of both the Bangladeshi-American community and the broader healthcare system*

*Sincerely,*

**Rafi Reyaseat**

*Vice President, BAPA*

## Message from the GENERAL SECRETARY



Tasneem Karim

*I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve as the general secretary of BAPA. I came to the US in the early 90s, a young Pharmacist from Bangladesh. Initially, my life was difficult, homesick for my family. Thanks to the senior founders for creating this wonderful organization. I still reminisce over the excitement I experienced at the first BAPA convention. I strongly feel BAPA keeps us connected together and we thoroughly enjoy being a part of this organization. Over the course of this past year, we hosted an annual dinner at Chateau-LA-Mer in Lindhurst, NY, a picnic at Hecksher State Park in Long Island, NY and now this beautiful seaport convention in Mystic Connecticut. Let's continue to forge beautiful memories we will certainly cherish forever.*

*Thank you,*

**Tasneem Karim**

*General Secretary*



# Glimpses from Dinner 2024





# Glimpses from Dinner 2024





# Glimpses from Picnic 2024





# Glimpses from Picnic 2024





A close-up, high-angle photograph of a typewriter keyboard. The keys are made of metal and show signs of wear and age. The keys are arranged in a grid, and the focus is sharp on the keys in the foreground, while the background keys are blurred. A semi-transparent text box is overlaid on the middle of the image, containing the word "ARTICLES" in a bold, italicized, white font with a black outline. A thin yellow horizontal line is positioned below the text box.

***ARTICLES***



# Bangladesh's Drug Policy Needs Major Repair

Murad Husain RPh, MS

Writing about drug policies in Bangladesh is both easy and difficult. The easy part comes from reading through the policies and some of the information available on the country's drug regulatory authority's website. The difficult part comes when I talk to pharmaceutical company executives and visit their manufacturing facilities. They are professional, the buildings and equipment impressive. And it is hard not to believe their claims that the medicines produced at their facilities are safe, effective and of good quality. The other difficulties are due to a lack of clear information from the government as well as from the industry.

Bangladesh's first Drug Policy was adopted in 1982. Among several reasons, the primary one was to make World Health Organization (WHO) recommended essential drugs available to all within an affordable price and to provide incentives to local pharmaceutical industries to grow. Intentions were good and the country's local pharmaceutical industry has witnessed a significant, continual growth. Also, all essential drugs (initially 170 of them) were made available at or below the affordable price that the government has set. There were two other drug policies adopted in 2005 and 2016. The impact of these policies is visible and looks good overall. There are over 250 pharmaceutical manufacturers now in Bangladesh. That many companies in such a small country is unexpected and may not be comparable to that of any other developing countries of similar size.

## Quality and Safety

The drug policy of a country should be based on the principles of securing, maintaining, and improving public health, and not just the health of the pharmaceutical industry. One may claim that the most essential drugs are affordable and available as a result of drug policy, hence met the principles of public health. I agree, and that was essential! Unfortunately, the devils are in the details. In order to make essential drugs affordable to all in Bangladesh, the Government of Bangladesh sealed the upper limits of prices for active pharmaceutical ingredients (API), as well as the prices of finished drug products. Most of the APIs are imported from either India or China. This may potentially compromise the quality of the drugs. The pricing of the finished products plays a major role in penetrating and securing market share. Therefore, the incentive is to lower the cost of goods to maintain a reasonable margin, since the upper end of the price is sealed.

One may wonder if these drugs are safe for use. People should ask are the APIs imported at a cheaper price by the local pharmaceutical companies of good quality? Are these foreign API manufacturers exporting the same APIs at the same price to the companies in the regulated countries in the west? If not, how do they sell APIs to Bangladeshi pharmaceutical companies at a lower price? What quality aspects are being compromised? What are the health consequences of taking medicines made with poor quality APIs, especially when taken chronically? There are many more criteria to be examined to make a full assessment of the situation. Similar quality assessment should be done for inactive ingredients used to formulate finished medicines.

On the other hand, one can import quality APIs and other raw materials at a much higher price than the government-imposed price limits to produce better quality and expensive medicines to export to other countries.

## **Safety and Efficacy**

Drugs produced in Bangladesh are unproven “generic” versions of drugs approved in regulated countries. Because Bangladesh enjoys the freedom from international intellectual proprietary regulations (patent) until 2032, local pharmaceutical companies can copy innovators’ drugs almost immediately. With few exceptions, most of these drug formulations must be tested for bio-equivalency with the innovators’ drugs, to ensure that the locally produced drugs are absorbed and distributed inside the body similar to the innovator’s drugs. This is a minimum requirement to ensure the safety and efficacy of local drugs. These bio-equivalency studies are not required for registration by the Bangladesh Drug Administration. In absence of any evidence of bio-equivalency, there is no guarantee that the drugs produced in Bangladesh are safe or effective.

## **Dispensing Drugs**

After more than 5 decades of establishing pharmacy education in Bangladesh the country still has not defined the role of pharmacists. A pharmacist’s primary role is to dispense drugs by filling prescriptions from physicians. This professional dispensing is a critical step in the overall healthcare system. In Bangladesh, pharmacies are run by B-grade pharmacists, with inadequate educations and knowledge of drugs. They usually sell prescription drugs without prescriptions, including narcotics. This has been a dangerous practice in Bangladesh with significant health consequences, including fatalities. I could be wrong, but this benefits the pharmaceutical industry and hence no initiatives to improve from that end. Making medicine is a science based on evidence. In absence of evidence of safety, efficacy, and quality

it can't be science and therefore these are not medicines.

This may sound harsh. But, when it is about the health, and life and death of people, there should not be any compromise.

General public fully rely on the prescribing physicians to select the right medicines for them and on pharmaceutical companies to deliver safe, effective, and quality medicines. Physicians, pharmaceutical companies and dispensing pharmacists must maintain the highest ethical standards, because public health depends on their honesty.

General public should demand re-writing of drug policies and for their uncompromised implementation. There should be an expert committee to review and identify the flaws and limitations of the current policies, rules and regulations and develop a comprehensive policy that defends public health.

We also need to define the profession of pharmacists in Bangladesh. There should be another committee to develop a drug dispensing system where graduate pharmacists (B. Pharm./Pharm. D.) will control dispensing. This is doable, and in my opinion graduate pharmacists will prefer to be a dispensing pharmacist instead of looking for a job in pharmaceutical industry.

It is important to make the Bangladesh pharmaceutical industry a sustainable global business. Larger companies are probably trying to achieve this independently. But this is likely to take longer time unless regulatory infrastructure and governance become effective, and the industry associations join hands to establish credibility globally, most importantly in regulated countries. I believe that the Bangladeshi pharmaceutical industry could become even larger and play an important role in global drug business, if planned and executed carefully.

Murad Husain (RPh, MS) is the Senior Vice President and Head of Global Regulatory Affairs at PTC Therapeutics, Inc, New Jersey, USA.

# How AI is Impacting Our Health: Transforming Medicine and Wellness in the 21st Century and Beyond

Kazi M Anam MS, R.Ph., ND



Today a common buzz is Artificial intelligence(AI). Yes, AI is impacting our lives in many ways. In this article, I will shed some light on how healthcare is changing with AI and how this can help us individually and professionally.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming healthcare, bringing new levels of precision, efficiency, and personalization to clinical practice and everyday wellness. From disease diagnosis to personalized treatments and healthcare management, AI is hugely reshaping the medical landscape. This article explores the multifaceted impact of AI on health, discussing its applications, benefits, challenges, and the future potential of this cutting-edge technology. We are embarking on a new era in healthcare with AI.

## DIAGNOSIS:

Diagnosis and its related processes should not be underestimated because hasty or erroneous diagnosis can adversely affect the health of patients. We know how a wrong diagnosis or late diagnosis is bad for the health of the patients. In medicine, one of the most promising developments with AI is faster

and better diagnostics. AI systems can go through accumulated medical data finding patterns that might take humans a very long time. AI performs well when dealing with large volumes of data such as medical imaging, genomic information and electronic health records. AI can do this very very quickly. However, the treating physician will take the responsibility for the decision regarding the case based on everything that has been presented. It's not that AI is replacing the professionals. It is increasing their efficiency and accuracy.

## **AI in Radiology and Imaging**

In radiology, AI algorithms have demonstrated remarkable accuracy in detecting diseases such as cancer, heart conditions, neurological disorders, and many other conditions. AI-powered tools can analyze X-rays, MRIs, and CT scans, often with greater precision and speed than human radiologists. For instance, Google's DeepMind has developed an AI system capable of diagnosing over 50 eye diseases as accurately as human experts, while researchers at MIT have created AI tools that can detect breast cancer years before symptoms appear, based on subtle patterns in mammograms.

Three years ago, a team of scientists from MIT's Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (CSAIL) and Jameel Clinic demonstrated a deep learning system to predict cancer risk using a patient's mammogram (Mirai Algorithm). The model showed significant promise and even improved inclusivity: It was equally accurate for both white and Black women, which is very important given that Black women are 43 percent more likely to die from breast cancer. This can be very helpful for individual females to predict their cancer risk.

These AI-driven diagnostic tools allow for earlier and more accurate disease detection, leading to better treatment outcomes. Early diagnosis, especially for conditions like cancer, significantly increases the likelihood of successful treatment and outcome. Furthermore, AI's capacity to handle high volumes of diagnostic data can alleviate the workload for medical professionals, allowing them to focus on more complex cases and improve patient care.

## **Gene Expression and Genomic Data Analysis**

AI is also at the forefront of genomics, analyzing vast genomic datasets to identify mutations and biomarkers associated with specific diseases. By integrating genetic information with other health data, AI facilitates the development of personalized medicine—treatments tailored to the unique genetic makeup of each patient. AI-driven precision medicine is proving especially beneficial in cancer



care, where personalized treatments based on a patient's genetic profile can improve outcomes and reduce side effects. This can also customize a lifestyle that is more fitting to an individual so that gene expressions can be somewhat influenced.

## AI and Drug Discovery

The process of drug discovery has traditionally been lengthy and costly, often taking over a decade and billions of dollars to bring a new drug to market depending on the complexity. AI is streamlining this process by predicting how different compounds will interact with the body, identifying potential drug candidates faster and with greater accuracy than conventional methods.

### Accelerating the Drug Development Process

AI-driven drug discovery platforms analyze vast datasets of chemical compounds, biological interactions, and clinical trial outcomes to identify promising drug candidates in a fraction of the time it would take human researchers. One example of this is Insilico Medicine, which used AI to identify a new drug candidate for fibrosis in just 46 days—a task that would have taken years using traditional methods.

Besides Insilico medicine, there are other AI-based platforms like Exscientia, Atomwise, and Benevolent just to name a few. More platforms are popping up routinely. The goal is to discover a drug at a faster pace with less money invested.

In addition to speeding up drug discovery, AI is also improving the success rate of clinical trials. By analyzing data from past trials and patient records, AI can identify which patient populations are most likely to benefit from a new treatment, helping to design more effective and targeted clinical trials.

## AI in Vaccine Development

The COVID-19 pandemic showcased the power of AI in accelerating vaccine development. AI helped researchers model the structure of the virus, identify potential vaccine candidates, and optimize trial protocols. AI was instrumental in the development of mRNA vaccines, such as those produced by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, which were brought to market in record time.

### AI in Personalized Healthcare and Chronic Disease Management

One of the most exciting developments in AI-powered healthcare is the shift toward personalized care. AI tools can analyze data from wearable devices, EHRs, and genetic tests to create tailored treatment

plans that account for an individual's unique health needs, lifestyle, and genetic predispositions. This approach is particularly valuable in managing chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension. So AI can have a significant impact on disease management.

## **Wearables and Remote Monitoring**

Wearable devices such as smartwatches and fitness trackers have become increasingly popular for monitoring vital signs like heart rate, blood pressure, and sleep patterns. AI algorithms process the data from these devices in real-time, identifying trends and alerting users or healthcare providers to potential health risks. For instance, Apple Watch's heart monitoring feature, powered by AI, has been credited with detecting abnormal heart rhythms, potentially preventing heart attacks or strokes in at-risk individuals.

Remote monitoring enabled by AI is also helping patients with chronic diseases manage their conditions more effectively. For example, AI-powered diabetes management platforms can analyze glucose levels, predict insulin needs, and provide personalized dietary and exercise recommendations. These systems empower patients to take control of their health, reduce the risk of complications, and improve their overall quality of life.

## **Virtual Health Assistants**

AI-powered virtual health assistants are also playing a significant role in personalized healthcare. These virtual assistants can communicate with patients via smartphone apps, providing reminders to take medications, answering health-related questions, and even offering mental health support. For example, Woebot, an AI-powered mental health chatbot, uses natural language processing (NLP) to provide cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) techniques to users, helping them manage anxiety and depression. Doctors VA is another company providing all types of virtual assistance to individuals and practitioners.

## **Enhancing Clinical Decision-Making**

AI is transforming clinical decision-making by providing healthcare professionals with data-driven insights that support more informed and accurate diagnoses and treatment plans. Clinical decision support systems (CDSS) powered by AI can analyze a patient's medical history, current symptoms, and lab results to suggest possible diagnoses and recommend treatment options.

Predictive Analytics for Better Outcomes

AI's predictive capabilities are particularly valuable in identifying patients at risk of developing certain conditions, allowing for early interventions that can prevent the onset of disease or minimize its impact. For example, AI systems can analyze a patient's EHR to predict their risk of developing sepsis, a life-threatening condition, and alert healthcare providers to take preventive measures.

Predictive analytics are also being used to optimize hospital operations. AI can predict patient admissions, manage staffing needs, and even reduce wait times by streamlining patient flow through emergency departments. By improving efficiency and reducing errors, AI contributes to better patient outcomes and lowers healthcare costs.

## **Challenges and Ethical Considerations**

While AI offers immense potential to revolutionize healthcare, it also presents significant challenges and ethical considerations that need to be addressed.

### **Data Privacy and Security**

AI systems rely on vast amounts of personal health data to function effectively, raising concerns about data privacy and security. Ensuring that this data is stored and processed securely is critical, especially in light of increasing cyberattacks on healthcare institutions. Robust data protection frameworks, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in Europe, must be enforced to safeguard patient privacy.

### **Bias in AI Algorithms**

Another concern is the potential for bias in AI algorithms. AI systems are trained on large datasets, and if these datasets are not diverse or representative of all populations, the algorithms may produce biased results. For example, an AI system trained primarily on data from white patients may not perform as accurately when diagnosing diseases in patients of other ethnicities. Ensuring that AI systems are trained on diverse datasets and regularly audited for bias is crucial for achieving equitable healthcare outcomes.

### **The Role of Healthcare Professionals**

The rise of AI in healthcare has sparked debates about the future role of healthcare professionals. While AI can enhance decision-making and streamline many processes, it is not a replacement for the

expertise, empathy, and judgment of human clinicians. The best healthcare outcomes will likely result from a collaborative approach, where AI complements the skills of healthcare providers rather than replacing them.

## **The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Disease Prevention**

The integration of AI into disease prevention represents one of the most promising advancements in modern medicine. By leveraging sophisticated algorithms and vast datasets, AI can enhance the accuracy of predictions, Personalized Prevention Strategies

Personalization is a key advantage of AI in disease prevention. Traditional approaches to prevention often involve broad recommendations that may not apply to every individual. AI enables the development of personalized prevention plans by analyzing data specific to each person.

For instance, AI-driven platforms can analyze genetic information to identify individuals at higher risk for genetic disorders. This allows for personalized screening schedules and lifestyle recommendations tailored to the individual's genetic profile. Similarly, wearable devices equipped with AI algorithms can monitor real-time health data, such as heart rate and physical activity, to provide personalized feedback and early warnings about potential health issues.

AI also enhances the effectiveness of preventive measures by facilitating precision medicine. By integrating data from diverse sources, including electronic health records and patient-reported outcomes, AI systems can help clinicians design targeted prevention strategies. This approach not only improves the relevance of preventive interventions but also enhances patient engagement and

## **Conclusion**

Artificial Intelligence is revolutionizing healthcare in ways that were once the realm of science fiction. From early disease detection to personalized treatment and drug discovery, AI is enhancing the accuracy, efficiency, and accessibility of healthcare. While challenges such as data privacy, bias, and ethical concerns remain, the potential for AI to improve health outcomes is immense. As AI continues to evolve, it promises to be a powerful tool in addressing some of the most pressing healthcare challenges of our time, leading to a healthier and more connected world.

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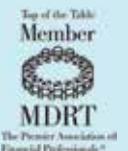
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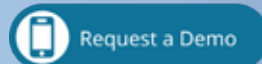
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