

## **Alphabet Has Filed 186 Health Care Patents. Watch Out, World**

Big tech firms have already disrupted retail, media, finance and nearly every other industry. Up next? Life sciences, according to [Ernst & Young](#).

Between 2013 and 2017 [Alphabet](#), [Microsoft](#) and [Apple](#) filed over 300 patents tied to health care, according to a new report published by the Ernst & Young Life Sciences division released Tuesday. Alphabet filed 186 patents, Microsoft filed 73 and Apple filed 54 in that time span, representing a 38% increase in the number of health-related patents filed by these three companies every two years.

This kind of deep-pocketed competition represents a new challenge to drug companies, Ernst & Young says. EY argued that while blockbuster drug launches can still be incredibly lucrative, as reimbursement pressures have grown, the number of drugs that are actually achieving at least 50% of analysts' peak sales forecasts has been falling since 2005. Instead, EY's report suggests, life sciences companies need to focus on harnessing the data they have to develop digital platforms that could create a way for patients to understand their health in a way that Airbnb has helped consumers find a cheap room or Uber has helped find a ride.

"Some of the skills that tech companies have are exactly what the industry needs," said Ernst & Young global life sciences industry leader, Pamela Spence said, pointing to big tech firms' wealth of data scientists on staff. "The rising demographics of an aging population and the emerging middle class around the world has suddenly created a huge additional market for health care."

Like pharma doesn't know it. E&Y says there have been nearly 90 deals since 2014 where life sciences companies have partnered with tech companies. Teva Pharmaceuticals partnered with [Intel](#) in 2016 to combine data pulled from wearable devices with a clinical trial monitoring Huntington diseases progression. [Novartis](#) has partnered with Verily Life Sciences, and Alphabet company, on sensors to be embedded in contact lenses. Roche recently purchased health-tech firm Flatiron for \$1.9 billion.

Alphabet's health care innovations thus far are running the gamut from artificial intelligence acquisition DeepMind and Verily, to its own partnerships with virtual diabetes clinic Onduo, smart operating room company Verb Surgical, and medical device startup Galvani Bioelectronics. Meanwhile, according to the types of patents they've filed, Microsoft has focused on developing devices aimed at monitoring chronic conditions, and Apple's patents have focused on making iPhones' ability to capture and use biometric data in more ways.

Amazon, according to EY's research has not filed any health care patents—yet. But their

announced partnership with [Berkshire Hathaway](#) and JP Morgan coupled with the company's secretive drug delivery team, 1492, represents yet another threat to health care incumbents.

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