

# US and China should collaborate, not compete, to bring AI to healthcare

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In the wake of the US government ordering the Chinese artificial intelligence company iCarbonX to divest its majority ownership stake in the Cambridge, Mass.-based company PatientsLikeMe, Eric Topol, M.D., of Scripps Research, argues for more, not less, collaboration between China and the U.S. on artificial intelligence development. Credit: Scripps Research

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between China and the U.S. on artificial intelligence development.

In the latest edition of *Nature Biotechnology*, Topol co-authors the commentary article, titled "It Takes a Planet," with [venture capitalist](#) and artificial intelligence expert, Kai-Fu Li, Ph.D., CEO of the China-based tech investment firm Sinovation Ventures. They argue that the "global health benefits of international collaboration, although challenging to actualize, outweigh those of confrontation and competition."

They critique the forced divestiture of iCarbonX as misguided and harmful to the U.S. artificial [intelligence](#) sector. "Chinese academics and companies already have unfettered access to personal health data," they write. "To compete in AI health, U.S. companies will need access to clinical data on a similar scale. How will that be possible if the current isolationist policy continues?"

Topol and Li note that [big data](#) has irrevocably changed the landscape of medicine, with every individual representing vast amounts of medical information—genomic and otherwise—that no human can adequately process. This is occurring at a time when there are unacceptable levels of medical errors, inefficiency, waste, burnout and depression among clinicians, and high costs for [medical care](#). In addition, they note that poor access to medical care among people living in [rural areas](#) increases inequities in healthcare.

"These problems mandate big thinking on how we can pool our resources to promote better [health](#) everywhere and for everyone," they write. "We have at our fingertips technology capable of analyzing petabytes of data. The difference now is that it is potentially achievable by capitalizing on the ability to analyze the data rather than capitulating to the challenge. Let us embrace this opportunity by working together collaboratively across the planet for the greater good of all."

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