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Quantum Computing: Future of diagnostics is being coded today

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A silent revolution is being built at the intersection of biology and quantum physics. After decades of pushing the boundaries of diagnostics with advanced imaging and AI, we are now approaching a hard computational wall. For complex conditions like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and many cancers, the interacting variables of genomics, proteomics, and real-world patient data are simply too vast for classical computers to master. This limitation caps the ability to move from merely spotting correlations to uncovering true causation. Unlike traditional AI, quantum computing can simulate underlying physical systems to derive precise solutions. The transition from correlational analysis to causal simulation will enable a more valuable and advanced frontier in diagnostics.

The global quantum computing in healthcare market, valued at $120 million in 2024, is projected to grow at a CAGR of 42.5 per cent, reaching $750 million by 2029. With the ability to process exponentially large datasets, simulate molecular structures, and identify subtle diagnostic signals at unprecedented speed, quantum technology is poised to redefine the limits of precision medicine.

Limitations of current diagnostic capabilities

- **Multi-omics overload:** A full human genome alone contains 3 billion base pairs, generating hundreds of gigabytes of raw data per individual. When proteomic and metabolomic data are layered on top, the resulting datasets quickly reach petabyte scales, overwhelming traditional computing systems and slowing the ability to process, store, and analyse this information efficiently
- **Imaging strain:** AI-driven medical imaging generates petabytes of data, straining storage and processing. High-resolution MRI and CT scans outpace the classical GPU capabilities, creating bottlenecks

- **Siloed systems:** Lab tests, medical imaging, and clinical records are often managed in disconnected systems, slowing diagnosis, duplicating effort, and diluting insights

New market areas for quantum value zone

The potential applications of quantum computing in diagnostics span a wide spectrum. Here are the most impactful ones:

- **Pre-symptomatic disease detection**: Quantum-enhanced analytics can identify subtle, pre-symptomatic signals across genomics, imaging, and lifestyle data before conventional thresholds are met. This accelerates the window for preventive action when interventions can most alter disease trajectories
- **Illustrative use cases:** Spotting the cellular anomalies of cancer invisible to current scans or identifying the micro-biological shifts in neurodegenerative diseases (like Parkinson’s & Alzheimer’s) long before cognitive decline begins
- **R&D acceleration via in-silico trials:** Current path to market for a novel diagnostic is long and expensive. Quantum simulation will enable in-silico trials, testing a new diagnostic on millions of diverse, virtual patients
- **Illustrative use cases:** A company developing a cancer screening tool or a treatment for a new disease can leverage a virtual cohort comprising millions of diverse patient profiles to simulate testing, validate performance, and reduce diagnostic bias, ultimately accelerating development timelines compared to conventional clinical trials
- **Unravelling complex biological systems**: Quantum simulations can model vast networks of molecular interactions simultaneously, revealing disease mechanisms hidden to classical models. This capability focuses research on the most critical pathways, reducing trial-and-error in experimentation
- **Illustrative use cases:** Simulating the complex protein misfolding pathways to understand the root cause of conditions like Huntington's disease, or modeling the systemic impact of rare genetic mutations to guide future therapeutic development
- **Advanced personalized medicine**: Quantum-enabled data fusion explores exponentially many feature interactions across genome, clinical history, lifestyle, and environment to build truly individualised diagnostic profiles
- **Illustrative use cases:** For an oncology patient, creating a 'digital twin' of their specific tumor to simulate the efficacy and toxicity of various chemotherapy regimens, allowing clinicians to select the optimal treatment path from day one

Key market drivers of quantum revolution

The competitive landscape is shaped by three forces that savvy leaders cannot ignore:

1. **Strategic capital inflow:** Over $4 billion in targeted capital has been invested into quantum computing in the last 24 months, with clear and growing allocation toward healthcare & life sciences applications. The healthcare quantum market is projected to grow from $120 million in 2024 to $750 million by 2029 (a 42.5 per cent CAGR)
2. **Incumbent positioning:** Major technology firms (Google, IBM, Microsoft) are establishing dedicated healthcare and life sciences divisions, while leading MedTech and pharmaceutical companies (Roche, Amgen) are forming strategic partnerships with quantum firms to address existing R&D challenges
3. **Rise of a specialised ecosystem:** A new class of companies is emerging at the intersection of quantum physics and computational biology. These are not general-purpose AI companies; they are hyper-specialised teams (like US-based PolarisQB or Finland's Algorithmiq) of PhDs tackling specific problems, from protein folding to simulating cellular interactions. They are the acquisition targets and strategic partners of tomorrow, and they are building their foundational IP today.

Over the period from 2020 to 2024, the average deal size of quantum funding showed a significant upward trend, culminating in a peak of $16.9 million in 2024 with total funding reaching $2600 million while suggesting a shift toward larger, more capital-intensive investments in later-stage ventures.

Addressing challenges and limitations of Quantum Diagnostics

Despite its immense potential, the path to widespread adoption of quantum computing in diagnostics is lined with significant hurdles, both technical and practical:

- **Hardware immaturity**: Current quantum computers remain in the early experimental stage, constrained by limited qubit counts, short coherence times, and high gate error rates. Achieving fault-tolerant quantum computation is essential for reliable medical use that requires major breakthroughs in quantum error correction and hardware stability

- **Algorithmic gaps**: While theoretical quantum algorithms show promise, many lack clinical relevance today. Real-world diagnostic problems require algorithms to be customised for complex biological data, ensuring speed advantages also deliver practical diagnostic value

- **High costs**: Building and operating quantum computers is still prohibitively expensive, involving cryogenic cooling systems, isolated environments, and specialised personnel. While costs are expected to decline over the next decade, short-term affordability remains a barrier for most healthcare institutions

- **Regulatory uncertainty**: Quantum diagnostics lack a clear regulatory pathway. Existing medical device frameworks (e.g., FDA, CE) are not equipped to assess quantum-enhanced algorithms or systems. Defining standards for safety, reliability, and clinical efficacy will be critical before these tools can be deployed at scale

- **Adoption hurdles**: Clinician trust, ease of use, and integration into existing diagnostic workflows are often underestimated challenges. Without robust education, user interfaces, and clear outcome benefits, quantum- enabled tools may face resistance from time-constrained medical professionals

Strategic mandate for healthcare leaders

The competitive landscape for the next decade is currently being shaped, and leaders must act decisively:

- **Form a quantum council:** A small, senior team to develop your strategy, monitor the ecosystem, and identify pilot opportunities.
- **Place strategic bets:** Engage in low-cost pilots with leading startups and academic centers to understand the technology and build proprietary insights from your data.
- **Build a quantum-ready data architecture:** The ultimate value will lie in high-quality, structured, multi-modal data. The work to prepare that asset must begin today

Conclusion

Every generation sees a leap in diagnostic capability: from microscopes to MRI to AI. Quantum computing could be that next revolution — not just faster, but smarter, more integrated, and profoundly more precise. Quantum computing is not about replacing classical systems — it's about enhancing specific bottlenecks in diagnostics like multi-omics analysis, imaging interpretation, and molecular simulation. The strategic decisions made in the next 18-24 months will determine whether your organisation is a spectator or a key competitor in this new era of diagnostics and medicine.

Ayush Singh, Practice Member, Healthcare and Lifesciences, Praxis Global Alliance, India