Governed Data Products: Healthcare's 'Walled Garden' for AI Growth

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP // *insights from* **Plante Moran**

It wasn't too long ago that conversations with clients about artificial intelligence began with the fundamentals of what the technology actually is. Today, we've migrated beyond explaining concepts like Large Language Models and predictive AI, and toward more strategic discussions about how the enterprise can meaningfully benefit from these tools.

Increasingly, the topic of governed data products has come into play. It's a phrase that has become somewhat of an AI buzzword, but at Plante Moran, we think of governed data products as more of a framework—one that begins with a standardized dataset, established guardrails, and defined use cases, enabling AI to deliver consistent, reliable, and scalable insights.

For healthcare organizations, governed data products are especially critical to the strategic, effective, and responsible adoption of artificial intelligence.

A 'Walled Garden'

Limits on accessibility of protected health information (PHI), as well as the security and proper encryption of PHI, is table stakes for healthcare organizations.

A lack of data standardization or strong layer of governance—key for every business, but particularly for highly regulated sectors like healthcare—derail AI adoption initiatives before they even begin.

Governed data products address that challenge and create a "walled garden" for healthcare organizations' data ecosystems, including PHI. This approach enhances visibility and control over sensitive data while limiting its exposure. Governed data products establish access controls, define ownership of information, enact data quality standards, and ensure not only the responsible use of datasets, but repeatability and consistency of their applications, too.

Assessing Data Maturity

An organization that creates a governed data product creates a foundation of data quality and control beneath its AI adoption strategy.

That said, it's unrealistic for healthcare organizations, or any organization, to begin an AI journey with 100% clean, standardized data. But a mature approach to AI adoption includes understanding where data limitations exist.

Identifying where in a healthcare organization data is fragmented, or where data security may lag, is step one in preparing the business for AI integration. It allows operators and other key stakeholders to assess which data pools are, and are not, best positioned to create the walled garden that will power AI solutions.

Starting from a data quality and security standpoint empowers stakeholders to more clearly develop AI use cases for their datasets that will offer the quickest wins in the long journey of technological transformation.

For many healthcare organizations, those early wins may be relatively straightforward—such as automating revenue cycle exception monitoring or using AI to identify data-quality issues within governed datasets before they reach analysts. Yet those wins are also impactful, reducing repetitive administrative work while improving consistency and reliability.

Data Readiness for the Future of AI

For healthcare-focused private equity sponsors, this data-first approach can lead to a more effective assessment of an acquisition target's AI transformation readiness. A company's level of data maturity will increasingly influence the speed with which sponsors can realize value from those investments.

This approach also leads to more meaningful support for existing portfolio companies' AI adoption journeys. Organizations with fragmented systems, inconsistent data definitions, or limited governance may find themselves unable to capitalize on capabilities already available within their technology stack. Establishing a standard of data-readiness across the portfolio prepares businesses to embrace more sophisticated AI capabilities that go beyond straightforward analysis and towards deeper insights.

Healthcare organizations can also apply this concept pre- and post-diligence by establishing governed data products built on standardized extracts from core systems—such as practice management platforms—enabled through API-driven pipelines. These datasets are structured with consistent definitions and embedded logic to normalize variation and enforce data quality. Governance is established upfront, with defined controls for analysis.

Consider a healthcare transaction where data is requested from multiple practice management systems, transformed into a standardized governed dataset, and reviewed through AI-enabled analytics. Rather than spending weeks manually validating reports and investigating anomalies, stakeholders can rapidly identify reimbursement trends, provider productivity issues, data quality concerns, and other areas requiring deeper review. The same governed dataset can then continue supporting operational reporting after the transaction closes.

On top of that foundation, interactive, agent-driven capabilities allow users to explore data, surface anomalies, and explain key trends. The result is a repeatable diligence capability that delivers faster, more consistent insights, improves transparency, and enables organizations to scale analytics seamlessly across transactions and into ongoing operations.

The eventual proliferation of natural language prompt-driven insights and dashboards has broad implications for healthcare organizations. Today, the technology remains in an arms race as executives ramp up pressure for teams to deploy successful proofs of concept.

The most successful deployments today are seen across healthcare businesses that have a knowledgeable team, a targeted use case, and a governed data product over which agentic AI can effectively respond to prompts.

Inevitably, however, AI will continue to expand its potential in healthcare and beyond. The AI adoption journey will not be linear, but as healthcare organizations continue to strengthen their approach—with governed data products as the foundation of their AI strategies—they will have far more effective outcomes within the use cases they identify. //



DEREK KAULFUSS
PARTNER,
TRANSACTION
ADVISORY SERVICES,
PLANTE MORAN



JON TANIS
SENIOR MANAGER,
DEAL ANALYTICS,
PLANTE MORAN