

OPINION: Medtech: A Great Value in American Health Care



Scott Whitaker
July 31, 2026

There is a lot of talk in Washington about “value” in health care. Some suggest the best way to create value is to simply lower costs by limiting the procedures and products available to patients. But what this misses is the long-term value these procedures and technologies provide both to patients themselves and the health care system overall.

The medtech industry has a powerful story to tell here: The cost of the medical technologies, devices, and equipment that fill hospitals, clinics, and home health care settings has remained very steady for decades. Not only is medtech not a cost driver—it is actually a cost saver. Here’s how.

The diagnostic tests, technologies, implants, wearables, and digital tools developed by medtech innovators help doctors find disease earlier, treat it more precisely, and manage it before a crisis requires far more expensive, invasive, and possibly even less effective treatment. Increasingly, AI-enabled medtech, for example, has the potential to extend that value.

Consider breast cancer screening. A prominent study found that AI-assisted mammography helped doctors detect 29 percent more breast cancer instances than radiologist review alone, without increasing false positives. It also reduced doctors’ reading workload by 44 percent and found 51 percent more in situ cancers, often described as non-invasive.

The stakes are clear. When breast cancer is found before it has spread, about 99 percent of patients are alive five years later. When it is found after spreading to other parts of the body, that rate falls to roughly 30 percent. The financial stakes move in the same direction.

Early treatment can take weeks; late treatment can mean years of surgery, chemotherapy, medicines, repeat scans, emergency visits, and other care. By one analysis, breast cancer treatment costs were roughly twice as high for later-stage disease as for earlier-stage disease.

Those potential savings are not abstract. They are hospital days not needed, procedures avoided, complications prevented, and costs Medicare, Medicaid, employers, and families may not have to absorb. Across the roughly 288,000 women diagnosed with breast cancer each year, even a modest shift from late diagnosis to early diagnosis could save lives and reduce spending.

That same value proposition appears across many areas of health care, including diabetes, which cost the United States \$412.9 billion in 2022. Some of the most expensive episodes are dangerous blood sugar emergencies that send patients to the emergency room or ICU. Continuous glucose monitors help patients see problems earlier and act sooner.

One large real-world study found that starting a flash glucose monitor was associated with reductions in hospitalizations for serious diabetes emergencies in both type 1 and type 2 diabetes, with the improvement lasting two years. Every avoided admission can mean fewer emergency room visits, inpatient stays, and related costs.

Cardiac care tells the same story. For a patient having a heart attack, a stent can reopen a blocked artery before the heart is badly damaged.



One widely cited economic analysis found that reopening blocked arteries after a heart attack adds more than a full year of life expectancy at a cost near \$40,000—a strong value by commonly used medical cost-effectiveness standards.

Outcomes keep improving: one recent analysis found that deaths within a year after emergency artery-opening procedures for the most serious heart attacks fell by roughly 30 percent. Without timely treatment, patients face greater risk of heart failure, repeat hospital stays, disability, and higher long-term costs.

Medical technology, alongside advances in prevention, treatment, and care delivery, has contributed to major public health gains. Since 1950, death rates from heart disease have fallen by roughly three-quarters. Across five major cancers, prevention and screening helped avoid 4.75 million deaths over 45 years. Another analysis estimated that cancer screening generated \$6.5 trillion in value and 12 million years of life over 25 years.

This should matter to budget hawks. Medtech is a part of health care where competition and iterative innovation can improve products while helping hold prices in check. It accounts for less than 6 percent of national health spending. Since 2000, overall medical prices have risen much higher than the prices for medical equipment made by manufacturers.

Part of the reason is that medtech is fast-moving and highly competitive. Companies invest more than \$20 billion each year in research and development, and improved products often reach patients every one to two years. Each new version aims to do more for patients while reducing burdens on doctors, hospitals, and payors. That value is not theoretical. It is realized every day in operating rooms, heart procedure rooms, imaging centers, clinics, and homes across America.

It is also an American strength. U.S.-made technologies supply about 70 percent of the domestic market, generating more than \$250 billion in annual output and nearly three million direct and indirect jobs across 16,000 facilities in all 50 states

The industry exported \$80 billion in 2024—more than automobiles or semiconductors. America is a global leader in medical innovation, supporting patients, workers, and communities at home.

At the same time, the federal government is now the largest payer of the nation's \$5.3 trillion health care bill. As policymakers debate affordability for patients and payors, they should elevate technologies that help avoid the costliest parts of care: late diagnosis, preventable hospital stays, complications, disability, and worsening disease.

Those are just the kind of results we all want: earlier answers, earlier treatment, and better use of a strained health care workforce.

For the woman whose cancer is caught early, the man with diabetes who avoids the ICU, and the heart attack patient who walks out of the hospital alive, the value of medtech is concrete. By helping deliver earlier diagnoses, better outcomes, and avoided downstream costs, medtech should be a headline, never a footnote, in health care policy debates.

Scott Whitaker is President and CEO of AdvaMed®, the world's largest medical technology association. AdvaMed® members make the medical devices, diagnostic products and health information systems that are transforming health care through earlier disease detection, less invasive procedures and more effective treatments, to help people live longer, healthier lives. AdvaMed® members range from the largest to the smallest medical technology innovators and companies.



Available Online:

<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2026/jul/30/medtech-great-value-american-healthcare/>



AdvaMed.org



AdvaMed



@AdvaMedUpdate

