



# Broadband as Health Technology Infrastructure in the Age of AI: Addressing Gaps in Access

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# AI assumes connectivity

- AI-enabled care today:
  - Remote patient monitoring
  - Ambient AI scribes
  - Predictive analytics
  - Hospital-at-home
  - Health information from chatbots
  - Health-related general wellness advice/consultation from AI platforms (e.g., Open Evidence)



The New York Times

### Opinion | As a Doctor, I Can Understand the Allure of ChatGPT

Several months ago, I got the results back from some routine blood tests, and let's just say several numbers were a tad too high.

1 day ago



Harvard Gazette

### Should you ask ChatGPT for medical advice?

Physician and AI researcher Adam Rodman says AI can be helpful but has some tips on how, when to use it safely.

3 weeks ago



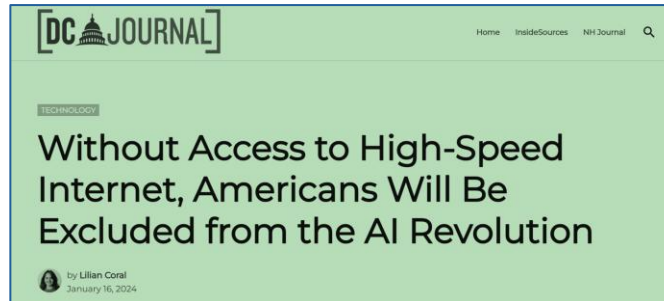
# Reliance on AI for Medical Advice and Health Information

Pew Research Center

### Users of social media and AI chatbots for health information are more likely to say they are convenient than accurate

About a third (36%) of Americans say they get health information from social media at least sometimes, and 22% say this about artificial...

1 month ago

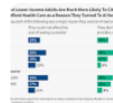


KFF

### KFF Tracking Poll on Health Information and Trust: Use of AI For Health Information and Advice

With the recent explosion of consumer artificial intelligence (AI) tools and chatbots, KFF's latest Tracking Poll on Health Information and...

Mar 25, 2026



The New York Times

### Opinion | Take It From a Doctor: It's OK if Your Medical Advice Comes From A.I.

As a practicing physician, I know that my patients are using artificial intelligence to get medical advice. Sometimes the signs are subtle...

Feb 17, 2026



*All of which requires a reliable internet connection...*

# Connectivity gaps become AI bias

No or limited broadband access

Reduced participation in digital health care

Missing or skewed data sets

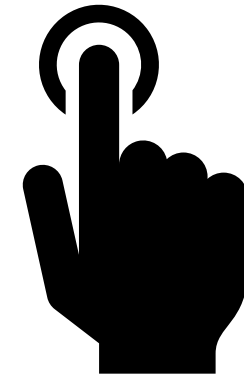
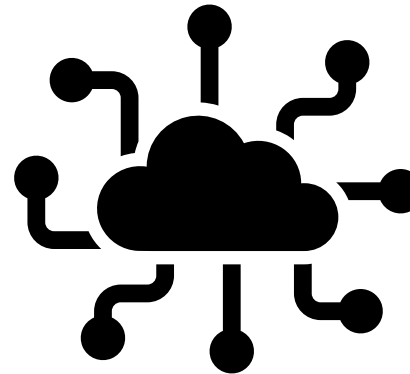
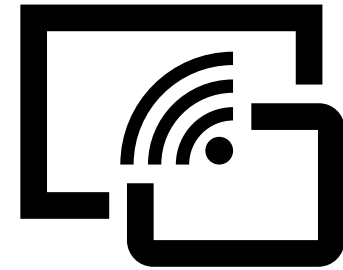
Algorithmic bias

Worse outcomes for marginalized populations

# Example: Remote Patient Monitoring

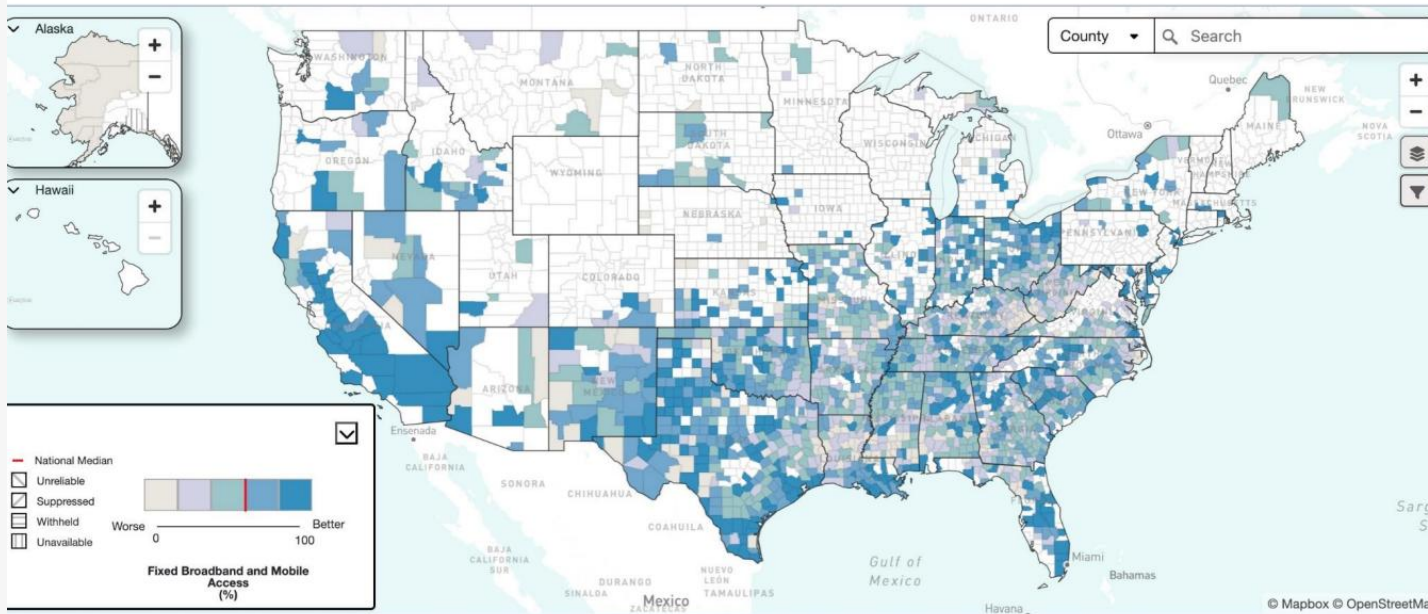
AI-enabled RPM only works if patients can connect using:

- Device
- Broadband connection
- AI analytics
- Digital skills and literacy





### BROADBAND VIEW: Fixed Broadband and Mobile Access in High Diabetes Areas



## Who may be absent from datasets?

- Rural residents
- Low-income households
- Tribal communities
- Racial and ethnic minorities
- Older adults
- Students

Image credit: FCC Connect2Health Task Force, Mapping Broadband Health in America Platform, <https://c2h.fcc.gov/broadband-health-map.html>



# Connectivity gaps become AI bias

| Agency | Focus                            |
|--------|----------------------------------|
| FDA    | AI/ML safety + effectiveness     |
| CMS    | Reimbursement                    |
| ONC    | Interoperability + data exchange |

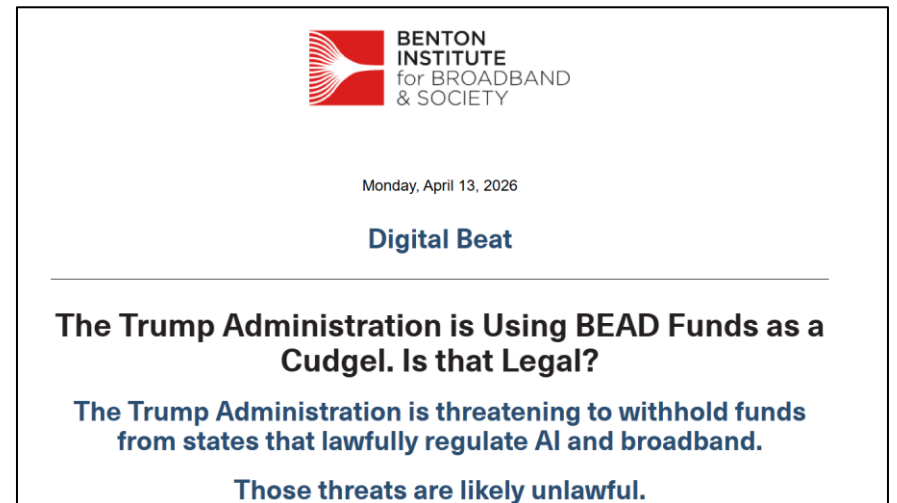


# AI Policy and Broadband Policy Colliding

## What is BEAD?



Sec. 5. Restrictions on State Funding. (a) Within 90 days of the date of this order, the Secretary of Commerce, through the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information, shall issue a Policy Notice specifying the conditions under which States may be eligible for remaining funding under the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program that was saved through my Administration’s “Benefit of the Bargain” reforms, consistent with 47 U.S.C. 1702(e)-(f). That Policy Notice must provide that States with onerous AI laws identified pursuant to section 4 of this order are ineligible for non-deployment funds, to the maximum extent allowed by Federal law. The Policy Notice must also describe how a fragmented State regulatory landscape for AI threatens to undermine BEAD-funded deployments, the growth of AI applications reliant on high-speed networks, and BEAD’s mission of delivering universal, high-speed connectivity.



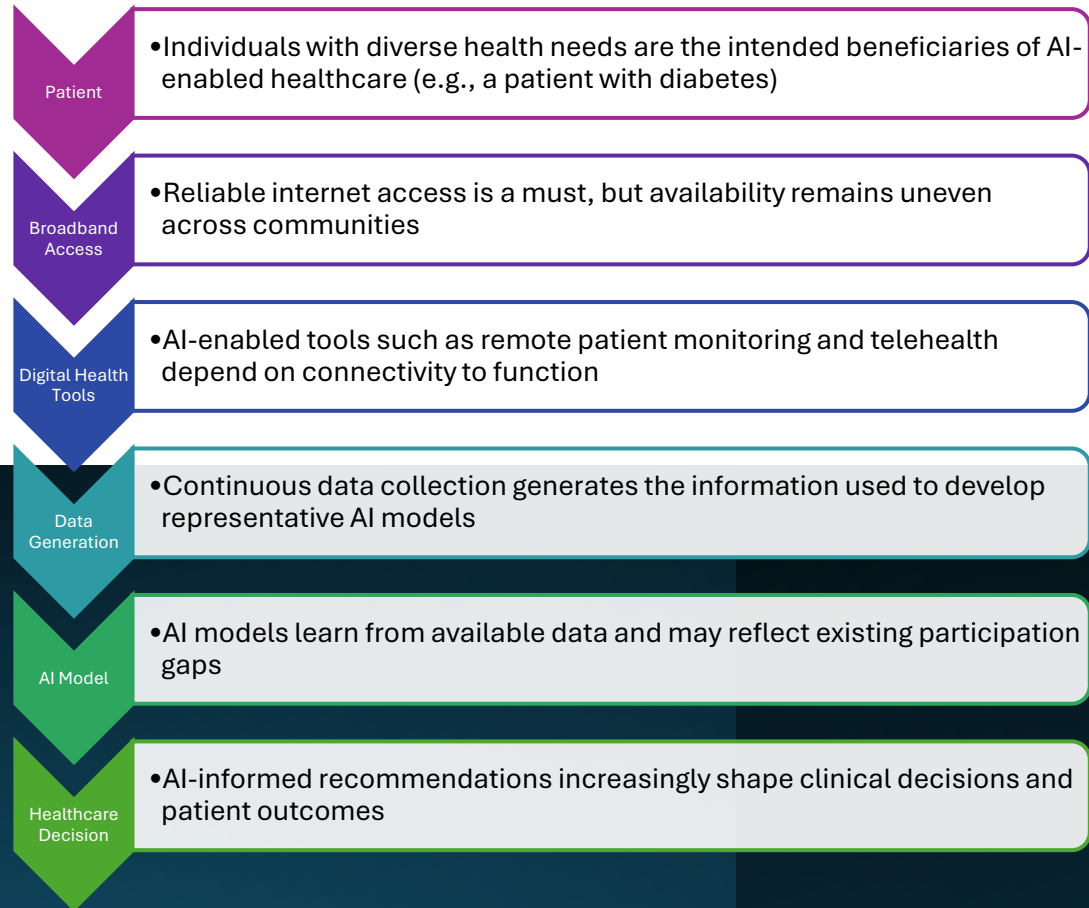
# Reframing the Problem: Broadband is Health Technology Infrastructure

- **Not merely:**
  - **Telecomm or economic development policy**
- **But**
  - **Health care access policy**
  - **AI governance policy**
  - **Civil rights/equity policy**



# Legal and Policy Implications

## What changes if we treat connectivity as infrastructure?



Bias in health care  
AI will continue to  
seep through the  
gaps in broadband  
infrastructure



# Policy Recommendations



Image credit: The Commonwealth Fund, In Rural America, a Weak Signal Can Mean Worse Health, <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/podcast/2025/may/in-rural-america-weak-signal-can-mean-worse-health>

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Incorporate | FDA:<br>Incorporate connectivity into AI evaluation                                      |
| Align       | CMS:<br>Align reimbursement with access realities  |
| Expand      | ONC:<br>Expand transparency and equity frameworks  |
| Recognize   | Cross-Agency Action:<br>Recognize connectivity as a source of infrastructure-driven bias |

# However, the FDA, CMS, and ONC are not enough...

## FCC

- Incorporate data on AI-enabled health care services in its broadband maps as part of the Mapping Broadband Health in America Platform to identify communities where connectivity is limited

## NTIA

- Include healthcare participation and AI readiness among the metrics used to evaluate digital equity and broadband deployment programs



**Thank you!**

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