**The Future of Healthcare is Artificial Intelligence**

On May 11, 1997, an IBM computer, called Deep Blue, beat the world chess champion after a six-game match. The match lasted several days and received massive media coverage around the world. It followed the classic plot line of human vs. machine. ([Source](http://www-03.ibm.com/ibm/history/ibm100/us/en/icons/deepblue/))

Fifteen years after Deep Blue’s victory, technological advances continue to make our lives easier. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become commonplace. AI [healthcare IT solutions](http://sites.mckesson.com/supplychain/webinarrequestty.html) are now being applied to streamline the healthcare supply chain.

**Intelligent Agents Seek Goal Achievement**

AI textbooks define the field as “the study and design of intelligent agents,” where an intelligent agent is a system that perceives its environment and takes actions which maximize its chances of success. An intelligent agent observes and acts autonomously upon an environment to direct its activity toward achieving goals.

One of the problems in healthcare is that product descriptions are not consistent and can vary depending upon their location along the supply chain. For example, what the billing department describes as an *airway adaptor*, the floor nurses refer to as a *Christmas tree*.

**Artificial Intelligence Across the Supply Chain**

The application of AI technologies to healthcare IT solutions has created the ability to understand, store and use product information in an entirely new way. AI technologies allow you to understand the underlying grammatical structure – the product DNA – used to build each product, together with all the natural variations that potentially exist. AI gives you the ability to maintain these structures dynamically, continually learning and updating as new data passes through the system.

**Smart Attributes Provide Structured Data for Comparison**

We now have an intelligent agent or a *smart attribute*, because it uses what it “learns” on one product and transfers that knowledge when it recognizes the same descriptive synonyms used for a different product. By identifying equivalent products, smart attributes provide more detailed product comparisons than were previously possible.

Technology will continue to advance and refine, taking cues from consumer sites, like Amazon, to improve ease of use, accessibility and predictability. Technology has already become more predictive, looking inward to automatically find and access data, presenting suggestions and anticipating your needs before you’ve even asked the question.

By incorporating these new technologies, next-generation healthcare strategic sourcing will add even more value, helping to make your job easier and organizations more profitable.