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Consumer Health In 2024: 'Switch Power,' 'Reframing Sustainability' And Meeting Household Budgets

by [HBW Insight Team](#)

Views from industry leaders and experts on the biggest trends, challenges and opportunities facing consumer health in the new year.

HBW Insight reached out to consumer health business leaders, consultants, attorneys, investors and other stakeholders for their expectations and priorities for 2024.

Respondents expressed optimism about the sector's health as well as realism about current economic challenges facing consumer health companies and their customers.

Recent momentum has made Rx-to-OTC switch opportunities of high interest, along with digital technologies and AI applications. Women's health and mental health solutions are on the rise, and sustainability, no longer in the "nice to have" category, will be an ongoing conversation, our sources say.

Read the responses we received to our prompt:

"2024 will the year of..."

**Manoj Raghunandanan**

Global Head Self Care and Consumer Experience Organization (CxO)
Kenvue

... health empowerment.

In 2024, we expect health and wellness to continue to be of utmost importance and consumers to feel more empowered to take their health into their own hands. We anticipate increasing focus on empowering women's health through life stages like menopause, advancement in digital and technology solutions, as well as telehealth 2.0 adoption. Further, we believe there will be more momentum in recognizing the importance of self-care's role in the health care continuum with focus on health literacy and accessibility globally. At Kenvue, we feel a strong sense of responsibility to how we play a role in the health empowerment journey. Continued innovation as well as sustained reliability of our iconic, science-backed brands will remain important to supporting millions in their everyday care rituals.

Read about [women's health](#), identified as a top wellness trend for 2024 by UK health food retailer Holland & Barrett.

**Mike Knowland**

General Manager

Bayer Consumer Health in Northern Europe

One thing is certain; 2024 will be the year of more uncertainty. A number of challenges will continue to impact the industry, including the rising cost of living, supply constraints, changes under the UK's Windsor Framework and the ongoing pressures facing our NHS. At Bayer Consumer Health in the UK, we will continue to place both customer and consumer centricity at the core of all the activities we do to provide better health for all. We'll also work with our valued customers to get closer to the consumer. A key part of this will be to empower more people to self-care, for example, by ensuring that we go beyond the brand and offer greater value than just selling products alone. We are going to build on our social purpose initiative under Canesten and offer greater holistic services and tools across the whole brand portfolio with many new offerings rooted in digital excellence.

Check out HBW Insight's exclusive interview with Bayer Consumer Health's head of R&D and chief scientific officer David Evendon-Challis about the company's new ['precision health' business unit](#), which will identify "digital and digital-supported consumer healthcare opportunities."

**Nick Linton**

Head of UK Country Operations
Sanofi Consumer Healthcare

At Sanofi Consumer Healthcare we are committed to supporting the self-care agenda in the UK, exploring new possibilities for switches, and working together with all stakeholders to shape a healthier future. And it is very exciting to be in a country that is leading the way in innovative switches and is a source of inspiration globally.

However, there are challenges ahead particularly in areas where stigma and social taboos are barriers for seeking treatment and creating health inequalities. One example is that more than 60% of Brits are too embarrassed to talk about their bowel movements to such an extent that many would suffer with constipation rather than buying a laxative from their pharmacy. We launched the Dulcolax #talkingpoopisgood campaign to try and get people talking more openly in this area. Another example: in men's health one in three men experience some degree of erectile dysfunction, but many are too ashamed and anxious to seek help. Our Cialis Together PeekatTaboo campaign was just the start of our important work in this area.

We are challenging taboos and championing better self-care literacy so people can make informed choices about their health and the options available. Making health care as simple as it should be to bring health and wellbeing to all is going to be a key priority for us in 2024 and beyond.

Read about Sanofi's successes to date with applications in Europe to launch [non-prescription Cialis](#).



Volker Sydow

Head of Global Consumer Healthcare
STADA

Consumer healthcare has been steadily growing and this is not going to change in 2024 and after. Consumers are more and more happy to be taking both self-care and health prevention into their own hands – a consumer trend strong brands will continue to benefit from. This is also shown by our STADA Health Report in which 73% have taken at least some action over the last year to improve their overall health whilst 27% have adopted a healthier diet. Against the backdrop of the general fragility of health care systems and growing cost sensitivity, this trend will become even more pronounced. However, no reason to become complacent because many Europeans still have room to take their health prevention more seriously, as not enough of them attend health screenings that are recommended to detect diseases early on. In fact, our study shows that four in 10 Europeans do not attend any preventive health checkups

at all. These facts just underline our belief that the long-term growth trend we see in consumer health care will continue for many more years to come.

Read more about the findings of Stada's [latest Health Report](#), which asked 32,000 people more than 30 questions covering topics such as health prevention and satisfaction with national healthcare systems.



Yvan Vindevogel

CEO

Damier Group

... significant transformation for the consumer healthcare industry.

This year is anticipated to bring a more integrated multi-channel approach and an acceleration in e-commerce, alongside stabilizing consumer prices and reduced inflationary pressures. We expect to witness a further divestiture of consumer healthcare assets from major pharmaceutical companies, accompanied by an increase in substantial deals for private equity funds. This period will also be marked by greater industry consolidation and a reimagining

of pharmacy and retail chains, which will face ongoing challenges in competing with e-commerce and direct-to-consumer activities.

In 2023, many companies experienced challenges with stock shortages. It is hoped that this situation will improve in 2024, offering more stability and reliability in the supply chain.

Focusing on companies of our interest, such as Cooper and Vision Healthcare, 2024 presents numerous opportunities across various domains. For Cooper, following the anticipated completion of the €2 billion transaction involving the Viatris portfolio, which encompasses 200 brands across 50 countries, the second quarter of 2024 is set to be a period of significant organizational integration and expansion. This phase will include a focus on enhancing and investing in leading brands, with e-commerce and omnichannel strategies becoming increasingly critical. Cooper is forecasting accelerated growth in these distribution channels.

Vision Healthcare, a leading European direct-to-consumer company in the vitamins, minerals, and supplements (VMS) sector, plans to expand into the retail sector with select brands. The company is actively seeking to acquire additional retail brands, with an aim to further digitize them. This strategy reinforces Vision Healthcare's commitment to becoming a more comprehensive omnichannel player in the consumer healthcare industry. The company anticipates unlocking substantial synergies between brick-and-mortar and e-commerce channels, enhancing its market position and operational efficiency.

Read about Cooper Consumer Health's pending [acquisition of Viatris' OTC business](#), expected to double the former's size and make it a "truly pan-European pure-play leader in consumer health care."

**Anna Maxwell**

CEO

*Maxwellia***... switch power.**

It has been over 40 years since the first medicine was reclassified (switched) from POM (prescription-only medicine) to P (pharmacy) status, and in the decades since then we have seen a seismic shift in the way people manage their own health in the UK.

The UK is now a world leader in reclassifying POM to P and GSL (general sales list) medicines, with countries looking at our switch model for inspiration and practical guidance. Despite the country's relative success, there is still much work to be done in shifting the focus from reactive symptom management to proactive symptom prevention and self-treatment of chronic illnesses.

The establishment of the new Reclassification Alliance, of which Maxwellia is proud to be part of, signals a renewed enthusiasm for and recognition of the transformative value of reclassified medicines to empower individuals to self-care, improve outcomes and reduce waiting lists. This could be a pivotal moment in reclassification history. I am hopeful that we are entering a new era where there will be greater transparency and openness between regulators and manufacturers with a faster process that facilitates a higher probability of success.

Maxwellia is proud to have our foot firmly on the accelerator with a number of new applications gearing up for assessment by the MHRA, and a further two P-medicines being readied for launch in Q2 2024.

We look forward to seeing how this renewed focus on reclassification will help pharmacy continue to carve out its position as the front door to the NHS in 2024 and beyond.

Read about Maxwellia's launch of a [levonorgestrel-based emergency contraceptive pill](#) "that provides the reassurance of a brand, at a price that is accessible for most women."



James Barder

CEO

Futura Medical, the inventor of Eroxon

... building on our success addressing the needs of a growing number of erectile dysfunction sufferers.

The prevalence of erectile dysfunction (ED) continues to grow, affecting adult men of all ages and their partners across the world. The impact on men and their partner's self-esteem and quality of life can be significant. We are extremely proud as the inventors of a cost effective and easily accessible clinically proven ED treatment. Therefore, in 2024 we will focus on bringing a new option to significant numbers of ED sufferers across new markets. We aim to build on what has been achieved to date, continuing the global roll out of our ground-breaking innovation that can help men get an erection in 10 minutes, bringing spontaneity to sexual intercourse. In many markets this will be the first time, including the key US market, that a clinically proven treatment will be available OTC, thereby opening up a new OTC sexual health care category.

Read how Futura is targeting [female sexual dysfunction](#) as a significant next opportunity for its drug-free technology underpinning Eroxon.



Chris Rebholz
Partner
Simon-Kucher

**Dr. Clemens Oberhammer**

Senior Partner
Simon-Kucher

... prevention and self-empowerment.

In 2024, the transformation of health and well-being will continue, prioritizing preventive care, reducing mental health stigma, and embracing technology.

Individuals will adopt more proactive health measures, recognizing the long-term benefits of early intervention and healthier lifestyles. Our Better Health Report 2023 already showed the recognition of preventive care in this cultural transformation, aligning with broader societal shifts. Efforts to destigmatize mental health are gaining momentum. While current prevention offerings are still limited, there's untapped potential, particularly among the younger generation. Payers and patients are increasingly willing to invest in health, providing ample opportunities for providers and the digital health industry.

Weight management plays a central role in reducing obesity-related chronic diseases and improving overall wellbeing, thereby impacting multiple health care products. New companies entering and offering innovative solutions will make the market more diverse and competitive.

And of course artificial intelligence (AI) is set to play a more prominent role in health care, serving as a source of information and enabling personalized

health solutions. Overall digital health is evolving, with new pathways for market access. Pioneering frameworks, like Germany's Digital Health Applications (DIGA), are leading the way for integrating digital solutions into mainstream health care. Understanding how different nations handle these changes will be crucial for companies navigating the global health market.

In summary, 2024 marks the year of holistic health, emphasizing preventive care, mental health destigmatization, disease prevention, and the growing influence of AI and digital solutions in health care, prompting companies to adapt to the evolving needs of a health-conscious society.

Listen to Rebholz discussing with Simon-Kucher colleague Lorenzo Eandi the findings from the company's recently published [Better Health Report](#) on HBW Insight's "Over The Counter" [podcast](#).



Austen El-Osta

Director of the Self-Care Academic Research Unit (SCARU)
Imperial College London School of Public Health

... self-care for mental health.

The landscape of self-care for mental health is poised to undergo a transformative shift. As we embrace a new year, our focus will intensify on integrating technology with traditional self-care practices to enhance mental wellness. The rise of digital tools, including mindfulness apps, online therapy platforms and virtual support communities, is revolutionizing how individuals manage their mental health. Digital aggregators for mental health support are also becoming increasingly more common and will help deliver more personalized and accessible avenues for managing stress, anxiety and promoting overall emotional wellbeing. In the UK, the NHS is set to play a pivotal role in incorporating digital self-care strategies, and policies are already being shaped to integrate digital mental health services, making them more accessible to diverse populations.

The year also highlights the importance of digital literacy in mental health. Given the abundance of online resources, the challenge lies in navigating and utilizing these tools effectively. Educational initiatives aimed at enhancing digital mental health literacy are also becoming increasingly important, so is the concept of a digital detox including balancing screen time with offline activities.

As we venture into 2024, the synergy between digital innovation and traditional self-care practices is set to redefine mental health and wellbeing strategies. Self-Care for Mental Health & Wellbeing is the 2nd pillar of self-care and will be the theme for this year's International Self-Care Day, which will be celebrated the world over on 24 July.

Read about how companies like Akili are creating “[digital therapeutics](#)” to offer scalable, evidence-based mental health solutions for consumers.

**Pauline Kent**

Managing Director
Satellite PR

... Blue Zone thinking.

For some time we've been moving from a health-care system focused on treatment-based reactionary care to prevention-based wellbeing, and for this to succeed it requires an informed and engaged consumer. My prediction for 2024 is Blue Zone thinking. On every level, from lifestyle to nutrition, we will be asking ourselves, what can we learn from countries experiencing greater longevity? For consumers this means behavior change, but it's a tremendous opportunity for OTC brands as well. When we launched Sudocrem Cycle More in 2022 to promote the health benefits of cycling we encouraged families to take to two wheels – we demonstrated caring credentials, we stretched brand relevance, and we created a whole new world of retail opportunities. It was much more than a PR campaign, it was a multi-faceted marketing and sales execution with wellness at its core, which brings me to my second prediction; brands that embrace purpose with a genuine commitment will go further and mean more. Perhaps it's time for the OTC Purpose Awards?

Read more about Teva's [My Little Masterpiece PR campaign](#), which builds on earlier efforts focused on getting people to cycle more, to get children engaged in the world around them, and to boost their creativity.

**James Walmsley**

Managing Director
AdverCheck

**Lucy Rochford**

Managing Director
AdverCheck

... supercharged self-care.

Self-care empowers consumers and provides outstanding value for money. But increasing pressure on UK NHS resources is starting to make self-care a necessity rather than a choice.

There are now more ways than ever to practise self-care. The traditional consumer healthcare product portfolio of OTC medicines and supplements has

been augmented by an increasing array of self-care medical devices, health monitors, home diagnostics and healthcare apps. As primary care services face more intense pressure, the key role of pharmacists as first-line healthcare providers is now finally being recognised with the introduction of the Pharmacy First scheme. While high-street pharmacies have had a tough year, the online sector is booming – the last year saw a significant rise in consumers obtaining prescription-only medicines through online pharmacies and clinics, most notably within the weight-loss category.

Against this background of expanded access routes, the 'conventional' consumer healthcare sector will have to work harder than ever. With the newly relaunched Reclassification Alliance established, we can probably expect some exciting 'first in class' POM-P (prescription-only medicine to pharmacy) switches in 2024. However, making these switches commercially successful could be challenging, given consumers can already self-select and obtain a very wide range of prescription medicines online as easily as they could obtain newly switched OTC medicines through a pharmacy consultation.

For AdverCheck, 2024 will be a year of continued collaboration and increased growth. We are looking forward to continuing our valued partnership with the PAGB through our involvement in the advertising and reclassification working groups. We have been lucky to work with three of the top five consumer healthcare companies over the last year, with new clients lined up for 2024. We believe the trend to outsource copy review, either to cover periods of increased demand or for ongoing support, will continue within the consumer healthcare sector, freeing up specialist internal departments to focus on growth activities.

Read HBW Insight's exclusive interview with Walmsley, in which we discuss the questions raised about [oral phenylephrine's efficacy as a nasal decongestant](#) in the US.

**Helen Fitzhugh**

Associate Director
Kaizo

... consolidation.

Consumers' wallets continue to feel the pinch, but the demand for health care remains as high as ever – if not higher, thanks to the 'new normal' of winter COVID spikes, followed by climate shifts that have resulted in unusually high spring pollen counts, followed by unpredictable heatwaves that precede soggy autumns dominated by a long tail of back-to-school germs. Consumers will respond by consolidating their buying habits, focusing on products and categories that help them adjust to the new normal. In a chaotic world, we all seek an element of control, and shoppers will prioritise efficacy, perhaps falling into two camps – those who will be willing to experiment with any and all new products, and those who will stick to 'tried and trusted' familiar options. For brands, the challenge will be adapting their marketing cycles to fit the 'unseasonal' new seasons, ensuring that they're in sync with what consumers need in the moment. Brands will also need to offer the 'control' that consumers crave. In practice, that might be multi-functional products that solve several needs, or it might be leaning into technology to enhance their offer – whether that's a chatbot powered by generative AI, or a branded app. Consumers are unlikely to spend less – in fact, they might spend more – but as they consolidate their purchases and eliminate anything that no longer fits the new normal, there will be winners and losers.

Listen to Fitzhugh's Kaizo colleague Kerry Lennox talk about [consumer healthcare marketing in the post-pandemic context](#).



Birgit Schuhbauer

Managing Director and Founder
BSS Consulting

... another pivotal year as we move into the era of AI.

Now that many of us have had their first attempts and got their first experiences with ChatGPT, 2024 will be a big year of artificial intelligence. Most of us will work to learn more about AI, to increase our knowledge about it, and aim to understand how it can be used in our specific area and function. We know that AI will revolutionize every area of business, whether it is R&D, supply chain, quality control, human resources, finance, administration, and many others. We marketers will focus to understand the new opportunities which will be available to us: faster and cheaper consumer insights and insight summaries on specific topics, better and target-adapted content and messaging, better understanding and identification of our consumer target

groups, and better understanding of their media use and many others.

AI will make us sharper, faster, and more efficient – that is the positive side of it.

In 2024 we will also see more discussion at all levels about the limits to AI, how to prevent and control fake news, how to set an appropriate and safe legal framework to protect our citizens from misuse of AI. This is a very hot topic. During the Christmas break, everybody I talked to expressed their expectations on the benefits of AI but also their fear of it and its potential misuse. And as we know, the world is altogether more hostile with many more aggressors and dictators since 2000, who might love to misuse AI against democracies and their citizens. So, we will see many discussions at a political level, in companies and in private groups, as they all are looking for rules how to protect their own confidential data and how to protect themselves from fraud and deception.

Listen to HBW Insight's two-part interview with Schuhbauer on the 'Over The Counter' podcast about [being a consumer health leader](#) and the [trends shaping the OTC industry today](#).