

Healthcare & Medical Technologies in Japan: trends and opportunities

08 Apr. 2019



Japan adopted universal healthcare coverage in 1961 and has kept the same system of high-level, affordable care ever since. While free access and low costs have had a positive impact on the population, such as increasing longevity to an average life span of 83.7 years, the system also has its limitations.

Currently, **Japan is ageing faster than any other nation.**



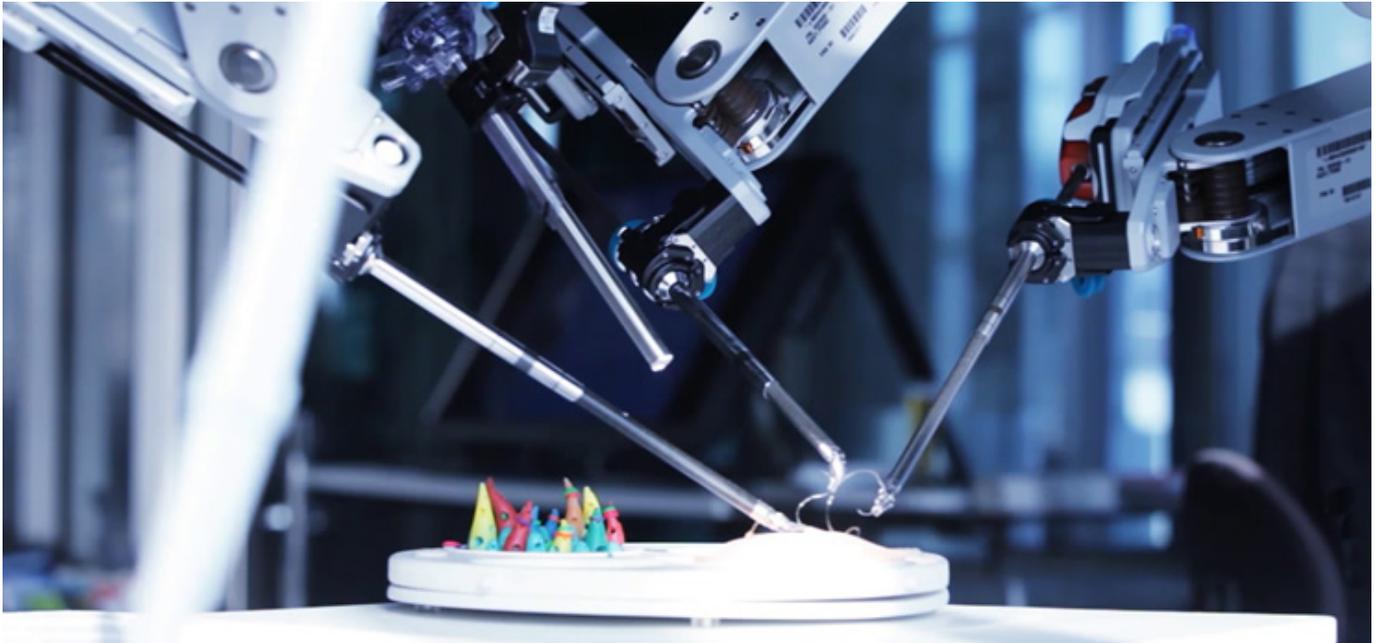
About 28% of the population is over the age of 65 and the government estimates that this percentage will reach 35% by 2040. This not only means that there are more elders to take care of, but it also means that there are fewer people that can take care of them.
- Paul Mori, expert in Healthcare & Medical Technologies in Japan

The increase in the number of patients and decrease of medical staff led to a significant overall **growth of medical care expenditures in Japan**, expected to reach €420 Billion by 2025.

Healthcare policymaking in Japan is focused on **overcoming these challenges** and **creating a more sustainable system**, using both local and international resources.

The government is committed to initiating **new healthcare measures**, meant to reduce expenditure and improve care standards, by revising the policy and introducing new programmes, such as the Integrated Community Care System and Japan Health Care Vision.

Besides major system changes, the government is also looking at **new technologies** to revolutionise the healthcare industry.



One of the important ways in which the government is trying to solve this is to encourage the development and adoption of new technologies. This includes, and is not limited to, ICT (such as the use of artificial intelligence, big data and internet of things) and use of advanced robotics. – Paul Mori, expert in Healthcare & Medical Technologies in Japan

While Japan is a technology and innovation frontrunner, some solutions are only produced outside its borders.

In order to stay competitive in the global marketplace, many Japanese corporates have set up open innovation departments, which are specifically tasked with finding cutting-edge technologies and facilitating collaborations with innovative companies. This opens the door for European companies with novel products, materials and solutions to seek partnerships with top Japanese brands. – Paul Mori, expert in Healthcare & Medical Technologies in Japan

What are some of these novel products, materials and solutions that are likely to enter Japan and reach fast market-wide adoption?

While Japan already has a mature healthcare system in place and a solid medical device industry, there are still several areas that are in need of new technologies, some of them only produced abroad.



Japan has several weak areas where it is highly reliant on imports, such as vascular stents and artificial joints. In fact, Japan imports 49% of all medical devices used in the market, so Japan is highly conducive for foreign companies offering medical technologies. – Paul Mori, expert in Healthcare & Medical Technologies in Japan

According to the Japanese expert, there are a few sub-sectors that concentrate the highest number of opportunities for European companies.

These include:

- Medical devices
 - Minimally-invasive treatment (i.e. those using laser technology and ultrasound)
 - Robotic surgery
 - Implantable devices
 - Custom-made artificial joints & bones (through use of 3D printing tech)
 - Devices that are suitable for disaster relief (e.g. portable X-ray equipment)
- Healthcare ICT
 - Use of AI for image diagnosis
 - Telemedicine platforms
 - Wearables
 - Remote monitoring solutions
- Infrastructure
 - Smart operating rooms
 - Training solutions for robotic surgery
- Assistive technologies
 - Assistive robotics
 - Solutions that leverage bioelectric signals
- Clinical laboratory testing
 - Liquid biopsies, particularly for oncology
 - Genomic testing for cancer
- Materials
 - Materials demonstrating superior biocompatibility

- Medical glue / tissue-adhesives (i.e. those using gelatin).

The Japanese healthcare system is designed to ensure it provides the best solutions and care to its citizens.

This means any imported products or services need to meet the high-standard criteria imposed by the market.

Only **high quality, cost-efficient, sustainable, innovative** solutions that can fill the current medical gaps and can help reduce the burden on healthcare professionals have a chance on the market.

Japan strives to be a global leader in quality of care, and this means that there is demand for advancements in every segment of the healthcare industry. (...) There has been growing interest in telemedicine, home care and solutions that enable the early detection of cancers (including relapse) and other serious conditions. The government has recently introduced new regulations offering guidelines for telemedicine and allowing remote examinations to be covered under the reimbursement scheme. Japan also introduced a new law elaborating the appropriate handling of personal data in the medical field, and there are also ongoing discussions among regulators about facilitating greater use of artificial intelligence in healthcare. These measures are helping to accelerate the adoption of novel technologies in what has historically been a conservative market. - Paul Mori, expert in Healthcare & Medical Technologies in Japan

While Japan is working on opening up to foreign actors, entering the market can still be a **daunting endeavour without the right partner**.

To help European companies that produce solutions for the Japanese market, EU Gateway | Business Avenues organises regular business missions to Japan.

Selected companies are logistically and financially supported to **meet the right contacts in the industry** and **establish meaningful business rapports** during weeklong missions in Japan.

European companies, in particular, have a lot to offer in terms of both quality and advanced technologies and could help to mitigate the societal challenges that Japan faces today. - Paul Mori, expert in Healthcare & Medical Technologies in Japan

Does your company provide healthcare & medical solutions that can contribute to tackling industry challenges in Japan?

The 2020 business mission will soon open for applications, so [keep an eye on this opportunity](#) [1] and send your expression of interest from 29 April to 22 November 2019.



Funded by the
European Union

More info on [eu-gateway.eu](https://www.eu-gateway.eu)

Source URL:

<https://www.eu-gateway.eu/news/healthcare-medical-technologies-japan-trends-and-opportunities-0>

Links

[1]

<https://www.eu-gateway.eu/business-missions/missions-calendar/healthcare-medical-technologies-japan-1>