I2M

Ten Recommendations to Boost Innovation in Healthcare

Conclusions from the participatory workshop on
Successful Adoption of Healthcare Innovation
organised by the WE4AHA project

In the context of EU project WE4AHA:
Widening the support for large scale uptake of Digital Innovation for Active and Healthy Ageing

Background

Adopting innovation in health and social care can certainly be a challenge.

Though most organisations are familiar with setting up innovation pilots, in the event that the pilot is successful there are still **many barriers to adopting and scaling up the innovation**. Successful pilots that do not scale and fail to cross the ´Valley of Death´[1] are **a waste of time, resources, and opportunities**. Even worse, they have a negative impact as they **demoralise people and personnel**, and thereby **damage any innovation culture**.

To **explore and overcome all these barriers**, We4AHA partners, Ticbiomed and EHTEL, held a workshop session on 2nd December 2019 in Barcelona. The workshop aim was to discuss **how to start a successful innovation journey** all the way from pilot conception to adoption and scale-up. The workshop gathered around **30 participants**, mainly from public and private health and social care organisations, who **shared insights and experiences** with each other.

To facilitate the debate, two sub-groups held discussions: one dealt with the **pilot preparatory phase** and the other with **pilot execution**. The two groups' ten **top recommendations** are presented below[2].

Recommendations during the pilot preparation phase

1. **Understand the need(s).** Analyse in-depth what the root challenges are. Some pilots are driven by a fascination with technology, but without there being a clear value proposition for the healthcare organisation. Settle the unmet need(s) first; then think about different solutions that could solve them. Besides, do not underestimate the need to adapt the organisation structures. Target the whole problem.

2. **Select needs aligned with the organisational strategy.** As several needs may be identified, those that are more in line with the top management vision will have more chance of gaining traction in the long run.

3. **Prepare a business case.** The initiative needs to be promoted internally in the organisation, and key stakeholders must believe in it. This requires communication and internal marketing of the idea, so the idea gains acceptance and the team is able to overcome potential future obstacles. Make sure that everyone understands the benefits that the innovation brings.

4. **Acknowledge that 'culture eats strategy for breakfast'**[3]. The organisation must be culturally ready and open to change. Good practices include to create a team of 'innovation champions' (motivated professionals who urge the system towards change); and to encourage professionals working in the field be part of the innovative process from the start, ideally asking them to propose the unmet needs. In addition, align and engage all the relevant groups of stakeholders from the start: healthcare professionals, information technology (ICT) staff, top management, the innovation department, patients, and formal and informal carers. Build consensus on the role of ICT in answering the need(s).

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[1] i.e in innovation, the gap between controlled pilots and their commercial application in the marketplace.

[2] Several of these recommendations come form previous projects such as inDemand (digital health solutions proposed and co-created with healthcare organisations) https://www.indemandhealth.eu/ or MOMENTUM https://www.telemedicine-momentum.eu/project/ whose 18 identified critical success factors have been transferred into the SCIROCCO tool: https://www.scirocco-project.eu.

[3] This famous quote is attributed to management thinker, Peter Drucker.

5. **Plan a funding strategy.** It is important to consider how to move from temporary funding (budgets for exploratory projects, such as in research and development) to long-term funding (operational budgets). From the start, take an implementation approach that considers up-front what the initiative will look like when at scale. Such an approach forces people to consider from the beginning the availability of budget and delivery of value for all relevant stakeholders.

Recommendations during the pilot implementation phase

6. **Leadership is key:** Every pilot should have an executive sponsor, sometimes called a champion. The champion should facilitate the appropriate allocation of resources and help to solve unexpected issues that might occur (as they will).

7. **Define accurate performance measures and monitoring:** Agree internally on how you will assess the pilot's success. If possible, use key performance indicators (KPIs) grounded on outcome-based measures that can become scientific evidence. Jointly, create a self-assessment progress monitoring system (with all stakeholders involved), and with the objective to identify necessary corrective measures.

8. **Create clear rules of the game:** Define what will happen if the defined KPIs are met at the end of the piloting phase. If everything goes as planned, what is the level of commitment from decision makers to adopt the pilot? Who will take on the internal ownership of the initiative afterwards? How is the initiative going to be funded by the healthcare organisation in the long-run?

9. **Avoid "silo implementations":** Sometimes, teams or people inside an organisation are working towards the same objective, in close vicinity to each other, but are not sharing information. This leads to wasted time and costs, not to mention missed opportunities. The team leaders should encourage the <u>whole</u> organisation to back the future adoption of the pilot: trust must be generated among all the stakeholders, so that they can share and understand their mutual needs and expecations.

10. **Lead through project management excellence**: Adequate skill sets and resources are critical for success, together with a realistic project plan, a timeline, and a clear distribution of roles and responsibilities.

WE4AHA partners want to thank all the participants for their outstanding contributions to the workshop, and for working to make possible better health and care, and active and healthy ageing.

About WE4AHA

WE4AHA is a EU funded project that aims to advance the effective, large-scale uptake and impact of Digital Innovation for Active and Healthy Ageing (AHA), building on a comprehensive set of support and promotion services. This activity is framed in the Innovation to Market Plan (I2M)

About EHTEL and Ticbiomed

The WE4AHA partners organising this activity were:

Ticbiomed is a business association that promotes collaborative projects in digital health. It facilitates open-innovation agreements between different eHealth stakeholders.

EHTEL (the European Health Telematics Association) is a unique pan-European multidisciplinary stakeholder organisation, which brings together corporate, institutional, and individual actors dedicated to the improvement of healthcare delivery through digital health.

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