

Why innovation matters in healthcare and how providers can deliver it

Innovation is critically important to healthcare organisations across the UK and Ireland and there is a real desire to achieve it, as providers strive to deliver the best possible patient care in amongst ongoing resource shortages.

Underlining the significance with which innovation is regarded across the sector, a 2022 survey commissioned by InterSystems, found that **almost three-quarters (71%) of healthcare leaders believe it is vital to the survival of their organisations.** That's a testament to the focus healthcare providers have on seeking out the most agile systems, tools, and treatments to help ensure optimum outcomes for all their patients.

In line with the above, **more than four-fifths of the survey sample (81%) said 'keeping pace with patient needs' was mostly driving innovation initiatives within their organisation.**

This shows that healthcare leaders understand the importance of developing new ideas to enhance the care they offer. **They clearly want to innovate, but there are many barriers in their way that they first need to overcome.**

Among the biggest of these are skills gaps, which were cited by 38% of the sample, second only to budget constraints (43%) in level of importance. These gaps often relate specifically to data, which many see as the fuel driving innovation.

Given this, it is therefore concerning that healthcare leaders across the UK and Ireland have little confidence in the data literacy of their teams. To underline the point, **45% of those questioned highlight that not having the skills to understand their data and analyse it is one of their biggest data challenges when undertaking initiatives.** However well providers and their teams interpret data, though, it will have little value unless it can be shared across a wider health ecosystem.

Achieving this interoperability is challenging for many providers. **Half of the sample (50%) said one of their biggest difficulties in this context was their requirements change frequently and they struggle to keep up.** Budget constraints (referenced by 43%) are another barrier, as is the slow speed of digitalisation, with progress sometimes hampered by the need for large-scale process and behavioural change.



A collaborative approach to change

Despite these barriers, if healthcare organisations look at implementing technology in the right places, it can bring about a series of **long-lasting benefits that will support them on their digital transformation and innovation journeys** to provide a more successful healthcare delivery. The key is implementing technology that supports collaborating with other trusts and health bodies to gain an overarching view of their data, enabling them to make better decisions and innovate further.

On one level, that may mean working in partnership with technology providers to undertake that transformation journey. On another, it entails working collaboratively with other healthcare practices, and other trusts as they move towards an integrated care system (ICS) approach. **That interoperability and collaboration will help ensure that data can be securely shared among themselves and with other entities.**

Healthcare providers need to innovate to securely and safely share that data with all the groups that need it. Being able to provide that holistic view of an individual's health status helps to deliver on the core goal of healthcare innovation: better patient care.

Changing up innovation

So, healthcare providers are committed to innovation. They understand it is essential if they want to keep up with patient needs. They are looking to deliver it through improved use of data and by developing partnerships with technology providers and other healthcare groups.

Yet, there is still a long way to go. **97% of healthcare respondents to the survey think there is room for improvement with their innovation initiatives.**

The most popular way of doing this is by getting access to real-time data, with 50% of the sample citing this.

55% of respondents said data management technologies were among those playing the most important role in their innovation ambitions, while 53% highlighted analytics. Data platforms were seen as important too, with 47% referencing them.

What's coming next?

Given the picture presented, **it is clear that in order for innovation to impact the healthcare sector it needs to be in a format fit for easy consumption, and also readily available to share and be efficiently interpreted.** The current maturity of advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), and Natural Language Processing (NLP) already go a long way to solving these issues, and in so doing offer a clear path toward the goals of healthcare personalisation, covering both settings and treatment.

The application of innovative technology is helping to support the future vision of care is based on the three key pillars of accessibility, interoperability, and personalisation. In this sense, technology that democratises data and ensures any employees with a base level capability can access it can also help address any issues with data literacy or skills by pushing innovation forward. This form of technology can allow clinicians at any stage of the patient journey to have **access to up-to-date, real-time data, and insights, allowing them to offer the best quality care to their patients, despite being up against time, resource, and budget shortages.**



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