

How Innovation-Ready are Healthcare Organisations in Ireland for eHealth? *Views from Clinicians*



Background

Having carried out a variety of previous studies on the overall barriers and enablers to the uptake of Connected Health (CH) nationally and internationally¹, it is clear to ARCH that organisational-readiness for CH is a key success factor in implementing CH at scale. This 'readiness' includes having the necessary resources of time, money, people and technology; as well as having a particular set of cultural and leadership characteristics within an organisation. As part of a wider programme of research which ARCH has undertaken with the Office of the Chief Information Officer within the Irish Health Service Executive (HSE)², we are seeking to explore how ready for eHealth healthcare organisations within Ireland are.

As a first step towards deepening our knowledge base within this area, ARCH has carried out a mixed methods analysis of the views, opinions and perceptions of the HSE's Council of Clinical Information Officers (CCIO). The CCIO membership is predominantly made up of HSE clinical staff who have direct experience or a particular interest in using eHealth within clinical practice. We have conducted focus groups and an online survey with the CCIO group to ascertain how ready they perceive their organisations are to make the necessary cultural, structural and financial changes which implementing a large-scale eHealth programme can often entail.

In this report we outline the findings from the quantitative element of our research with the CCIO group. This entailed a comprehensive online survey which was circulated to all CCIO members (N=101). While this survey is limited in size it provides us with some very interesting insights which can help us to begin to further explore and understand how to increase the likelihood of successful implementation of the eHealth strategy within the HSE.

Key Findings

1. Positive perceptions of organisational-readiness for eHealth

Most respondents within the sample agree, to some extent at least, that their organisations are ready to carry out the internal changes required to implement eHealth.

- Over half of all respondents in the sample agree that their organisation is ready to implement eHealth (55%)
- Almost 60% agree that there is strong leadership support and clinical support for eHealth within their organisation
- 56% agree that innovation is valued in their workplace

These are all factors which are identified as key to successful implementation of change programmes within healthcare.

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Research Theme

Change

Completion Date

May 2016

Project Deliverable*

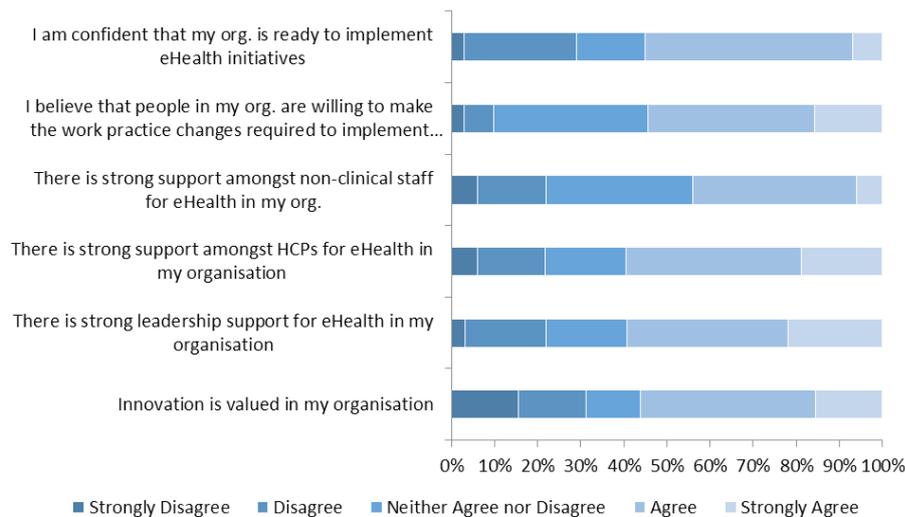
Report

Ref: *Core/2015/CH1-D3*

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Figure 1. Perceived readiness of their organisation for eHealth (all respondents N=32).



2. Leadership and clinical support in place – however more resources of money, people and time required

- When we drill down further in our questioning regarding the specific resources available to implement eHealth, while again respondents perceive there to be adequate amounts of clinical and leadership support for eHealth, fewer believe that their organisations have the time, people or money necessary to implement eHealth.

3. Nurses more positive than doctors regarding their organisations readiness for eHealth

- While 77% of nurses in the sample agree that their organisation values innovation, only 38% of doctors are in agreement with this; and while 50% of nurses are confident that their organisations are innovation-ready, 63% of doctors disagree that this is the case.
- Nurses are the largest single professional group employed in the Irish health service³, accounting for approximately 34% of the 102,245 people employed in the sector, compared with 25% who are management and administrative support staff; and 9% who are doctors. As such nurses are a very important group when it comes to implementing large scale transformation within the HSE, and thus it is encouraging that they have relatively positive perceptions of their organisations.

4. Community Care emerges as the sector that is perceived as least ready for eHealth

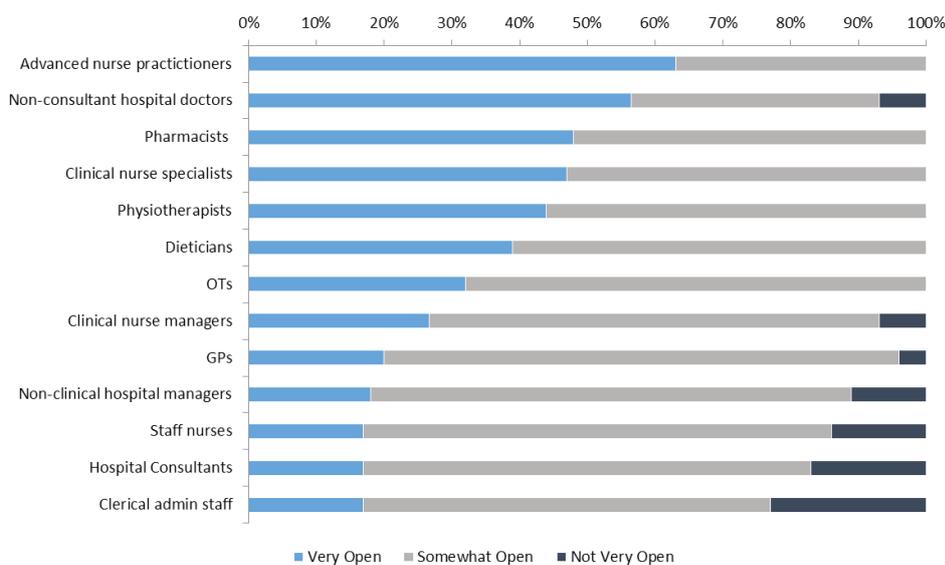
- Community care is perceived as being particularly under-resourced in terms of IT capability relative to Primary Care and Hospitals.
- No respondent from community care agrees that there is strong leadership support for eHealth in their workplace, and a small minority believe that their organisations are ready for eHealth.

5. Staff open-ness to the change that implementing eHealth entails

- Advanced nurse practitioners and non-consultant hospital doctors are perceived as most open to change, with 63% and 57% of respondents saying they are respectively 'very open' to change.

- On the opposite end of the scale, staff nurse, hospital consultant and clerical administrative staff are perceived as least open to change with just 17% of respondents saying that either group are 'very open' to change.
- Non-clinical staff are perceived by survey respondents as the group least open to change and least supportive of eHealth across the board. Given that the sample is drawn from clinicians, we can theorise that there may be some bias towards those from a non-clinical background. That potential bias notwithstanding, this is still an area worthy of further consideration – perhaps non-clinical partners need to be included more within the eHealth programme, especially given their importance in terms of the role they will likely play in the roll-out of electronic health records (EHR), and other eHealth projects.

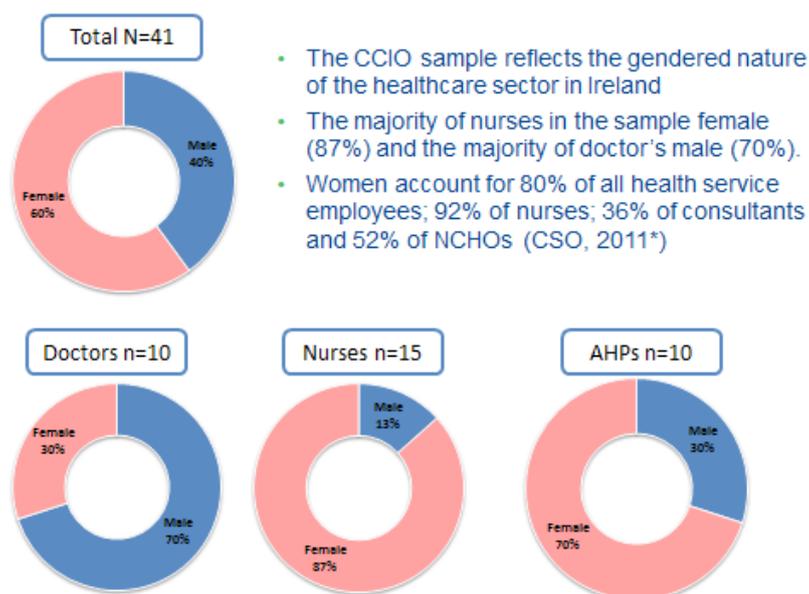
Figure 2. Perceived openness to change by healthcare profession.



6. Power and hierarchy within healthcare

- The power dimension within the health care workforce cannot be ignored in our analysis of the eHealth implementation⁴. Both in terms of empowering patients (and potentially dis-empowering clinicians⁵) and also with regard to the gendered nature of the medical professions.
- In terms of overall sample characteristics, the CCIO group reflects the gendered nature of the healthcare sector in Ireland, with the majority of nurses within the sample being female (87%) and the majority of doctors being male (70%).
- Women account for four out of five of all workers within the Irish health service⁶, making up 40% of doctors, 92% of nurses, and 85% of administrative staff⁷. This gendering of the health service is important to understand in the context of attempting to implement large scale change.
- Staff nurses and administrative staff are most likely to be female within the HSE, and are also at the lower echelons in terms of power-bases within the organisation. What, if any, impact this may have on the successful roll-out of eHealth warrants further investigation.

Figure 3. Gendered nature of the sample.



Preliminary Conclusions

- While the findings show that the majority of respondents perceive their organisations to be innovation-ready, the data points us towards particular groups which potentially require further investigation and assistance with implementing change.
- For example, doctors' negative perceptions of their organisations; the issue of community care; the perceptions of staff nurses and administrative staff as being closed to change all warrant further exploration in order that the potential to successfully implement eHealth is maximised.

References

- ¹Quinlan, M., Doyle, G. and Geiger, S. (2016) 'The Healthcare Organisational-level Change Challenge; Key Learnings from the Movement towards Integrated Care in the US'; Applied Research for Connected Health (ARCH) Report, April 2016; Quinlan, M., Geiger, S., Duffy, J. and Phelan, P. (2014) 'Analysis of the implementation of connected healthcare within the United Kingdom - barriers and enablers', Applied Research for Connected Health (ARCH) Report, January 2014.; Quinlan, M. and Geiger, S. (2014) 'Analysis of the implementation of connected healthcare within the US – barriers and enablers', Applied Research for Connected Health (ARCH) Report, June 2014.
- ²For more details of the ARCH/HSE collaboration: <http://www.ehealthireland.ie/Stakeholder-Engagement/Research/Research-into-eHealth-Implementation1.html>
- ³http://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Health_in_Ireland_KeyTrends2015.pdf
- ⁴<https://www.medicalcouncil.ie/News-and-Publications/Publications/Annual-Reports-Statistics-/Medical-workforce-intelligence-report-.pdf>
- ⁵ Scrambler, S., Newton, P., Asimakopoulou, K. (2014) The context of empowerment and selfcare within the field of diabetes. Health, Vol. 18(6) p. 545-560
- ⁶ <http://www.cso.ie/en/newsandevents/pressreleases/2014pressreleases/pressreleasewomenandmeninireland2013/>
- ⁷ <http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-wamii/womenandmeninireland2013/healthlist/health/#d.en.65648>

Companies with a commercial interest in these connected health opportunities or who are interested in collaborating with ARCH should contact Alica May, Project Co-ordinator on info@arch.ie or call 01 7165400.