Response to NHS Chief Executive’s Open Call for Evidence and Ideas

Respondent ID: 229

Organisation name: University of Kent

Type of response: Document
Spreading Innovation in the NHS – University of Kent Input

With the current UK technological landscape, a focus on the barriers towards the adoption and diffusion of innovation in the health sector should be a priority in addition to the invention of new technologies. One avenue for addressing the challenge of adopting innovative technologies, such as mobile healthcare apps, could be the lack of standardised tools of comparison to assess how much they would truly improve the quality of patient care. There are many feasibility questions that need to be answered before these technologies are implemented at scale and pace, including: the cost-effectiveness of the technology, how the technology would affect the organisational culture and what demands the technology would place on scarce resources.

The University of Kent can address these feasibility questions by developing standard metrics of comparison. Through the University’s Schools of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Research, Economics, Anthropology, and Psychology, there is expertise in health and social policy, health economics and health behaviour and decision making. For example, the University of Kent’s multidisciplinary school of social science retained its leading position in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise, where 95% of their submission was judged ‘internationally significant’. The Personal Social Services Research Unit, based at the University of Kent, the LSE and the University of Manchester, brings together expertise in research aimed at the improvement of the equity and efficiency of health and social care. Their previous work has included studying the quality of life in care settings and the care standards by which that quality can be measured as well as costs and outcomes in health and social care. The Centre for Health Service Studies has experience in the evaluation of health services and research training. The University’s research also undertakes the important application of psychological research to health behaviour, which is central to understanding the user’s perception of new technologies and ultimately their adoption.

Additionally, the Kent Business School has expertise in areas of business and management practice in both the private and public sectors. Of particular relevance is research done in the area of change management, heuristic optimisation including aspects of health management and medicine and the implementation and design of information systems. The School of Mathematics, Statistics and Actuarial Science’s Actuarial Science Group applies mathematical and statistical techniques to financial problems, managing financial risk and making financial sense of the future for their clients. They look at what has happened in the past and use it to make predictions about the future, developing appropriate strategies to deal with the risks involved.

KentHealth (http://www.kent.ac.uk/health/), based in academia, works in partnership with the NHS, industry and third sector organisations to foster innovation in health. KentHealth is our vehicle to bring these cross-University activities together into a coherent interface and present a co-ordinated and clear one-stop shop for both internal and external stakeholders. This agency can help direct the University of Kent’s education, research and evaluation expertise to meet NHS innovation priority areas.