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Conference Abstract

Staff engagement with telehealth and coordinated care programmes: a landscaping study across EU regions

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Abstract

Introduction: The importance of staff engagement in the development of telehealth and coordinated care initiatives is well-established. Mainstreaming of pilot projects is dependent on motivating and engaging staff from an early stage (Broderick & Lindeman, 2013). In practical terms, staff engagement involves ensuring active involvement of the workforce in project development, provision of adequate training opportunities and nurturing of 'clinical champions' (Gagnon et al, 2012)

This study explored staff engagement activities across telehealth and coordinated care activities within a number of European regions and programmes. The study formed one part of the EU-wide Advancing Coordinated Care and Telehealth Deployment (ACT) project, which aims to promote best practice in the use of digital integrated healthcare.

Aims and objectives: The study aimed to provide an insight into the current landscape of staff engagement activities in telehealth and coordinated care programmes. There was particular interest in programmes' perceptions of the importance of staff engagement and in the different activities that they carried out in this area of business change.

Methods: The ACT project encompasses 17 telehealth and/or coordinated care programmes across five European regions. Managers from all programmes were sent a staff engagement survey comprising Likert-Scale items and prompts for free-text responses. The survey covered issues such as the strategic place of staff engagement, the involvement of clinicians in programme implementation, and workforce development activities.

Results: There was a generally positive response to the Likert-type items exploring broad areas of staff engagement: for example, two-thirds of respondents felt that they involved frontline staff in project design and implementation "a great deal".

Analysis of free-text responses provided a much more mixed picture. Some programmes reported the involvement of clinical staff in the development of project plans from an early stage and acknowledged the need to give stakeholders ownership in any change process.

A number of programmes appeared to have engaged clinicians less in the development of programmes, focusing instead on ensuring that staff understood operational aspects of programme delivery (e.g. patient enrolment procedures).

This distinction between project development and operational activities became apparent in relation to other areas explored within the survey. For example, some programmes provided training that related to all aspects of the programme, including pathway redesign. More commonly though, workforce development appeared to focus on day-to-day activities and functions such as patient referral and monitoring.

Conclusion: The landscaping survey has identified that most programmes report a high level of staff engagement. However, the analysis has shown that in many cases, this is limited to purely operational aspects of programmes such as patient recruitment and operation of IT systems.

These findings will underpin the development of an assessment matrix for staff engagement, providing a tool for the identification of best practice in this important area of project development.

Keywords

telehealth; integrated care; staff engagement; workforce development

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