How do we ensure that innovation in health service delivery and organization is implemented, sustained and spread?

Ellen Nolte
Professor of Health Services and Systems Research
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine
Tallinn, 14 June 2018
How do we ensure that innovation in health service delivery and organization is implemented, sustained and spread?

Ellen Nolte
Health systems globally face numerous challenges

- Changing disease burden coupled with population ageing and increasing frailty at old age
- Advances in medical technology
- Growing consumer expectations
- Shortages and uneven distribution of health and care professionals
- Persistent and, in some settings, rising health inequalities and inequities in access to and utilisation of health care services
Most innovations fail to spread

Source: Dearing & Cox, 2018
How to translate change into large-scale, sustainable and effective strategies?

“I want you to find a bold and innovative way to do everything exactly the same way it’s been done for 25 years.”
The introduction of innovation involves a series of interlinked and overlapping processes. **Context**

- **Adoption**: decision to use and implement an innovation
- **Dissemination**: efforts to persuade others to adopt an innovation
- **Scale up**: systematic process of expanding the coverage of an innovation
- **Implementation**: process of integrating an innovation into a setting
- **Sustaining**: process by which an innovation has become routine element
Key factors that support the adoption, implementation and sustaining of innovations

- **Leadership and management** at different tiers that is supportive of and committed to change
  - Appropriate governance and management mechanisms, including accountability and, where relevant, performance agreements
  - Clear and compelling vision for the innovation
  - Sustained support to participating organisations

- Early and widespread **stakeholder involvement**, including staff and service users
  - Developing structures, guidelines and indicators to secure buy-in

- **Dedicated and ongoing resources**, including funding, infrastructure, staff and time
  - Design and implementation team to guide implementation
  - Start-up funding to strengthen capabilities and readiness
  - Sufficient time to enable organisations and services to learn to work in new ways
  - Strategic investment in staff and capacity building
Key factors that support the adoption, implementation and sustaining of innovations

- **Effective communication** across the organisation
  - Lack of strategic investment into communication may lead to suboptimal implementation and, possibly, performance of the innovation

- **Ongoing adaptation** of the innovation to the local context
  - Focus on what is relevant and works locally

- Ongoing **monitoring** and timely **feedback** about progress
  - Systematic collection of data to assess performance, identify opportunities for further improvement and/or to identify problems

- **Evaluation** and demonstration of the (cost-)effectiveness of the innovation being introduced, including assessment of health benefits

- **Strong political support and, likely, adaptation of funding models, as well as evidence of effectiveness vital for further spread and scale up**
Questions that ‘innovation implementers’ should consider

- Is the innovation worth introducing?
  - Who will benefit and how?
  - What are the potential unintended consequences?
  - What else is going on that might impact those tasked with implementation?

- What is the commitment to continued monitoring and evaluation?
  - What evidence is available and needed?
  - How to balance evidence of costs, quality and outcomes?

- How will the perspectives and priorities of the public in service innovation be considered?
Take-home messages

- Giving organisations and services support, sufficient time and flexibility to learn to function in new ways will be key to successful service innovation.
- Responsible innovation is needed to ensure that the benefits of innovation are widely distributed and shared, are sustainable and meet societies’ needs more broadly.
- People’s perspectives on and priorities for service innovation should be explicitly considered if countries are serious about achieving people-centred health systems.