



Title: Innovation Pathways Within the NHS: An Introductory Review

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Abstract:

The industry of healthcare is recognised as one of the most innovative. There is substantial scope for new technologies and care models to not only boost patient outcomes but to do so at reduced cost to healthcare providers and consumers.

Promoting innovation within national health systems such as the National Health Service (NHS) in the United Kingdom (UK) has been set as a key target for healthcare professionals and politicians. However, while the UK has a world-class biomedical research industry, several reports in the last twenty years have highlighted the poor track record of the NHS in encouraging and adopting innovations, with the journey from idea to implementation of health technology often taking years and costing billions of pounds, with a high failure rate.

This has led to the establishment of several innovation pathways within and around the NHS, to encourage the invention, development and implementation of cost-effective technologies that improve healthcare delivery. These pathways span local, regional and national health infrastructure. They operate at different stages of the innovation pipeline, with their scope and work defined by location, technology area or industry sector, based on the specific problem identified when they were set up.

In this introductory review, we outline each of the major innovation pathways operating at local, regional and national levels across the NHS, including their history, governance, operating procedures and areas of expertise. The extent to which innovation pathways address current challenges faced by innovators is discussed, as well as areas for improvement and future study.