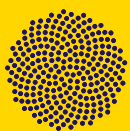


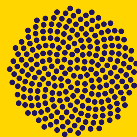
Ireland Where Digital Health Thrives



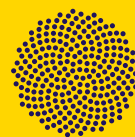
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Working across the health sector

Dr Steven Griffin, Health Innovation Hub Ireland Manager at National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG) and Eimear Galvin, Health Innovation Hub Ireland Manager at Trinity College Dublin, talk about how digital health is helping to address problems in healthcare and the economic opportunities of the industry.



“Our primary mission is to connect industry with healthcare and vice versa,” says Steven Griffin. “Health Innovation Hub Ireland (HIHI) works as a nexus between the clinical, technical and commercial areas of the medtech industry, to help move ideas or products towards the market or towards implementation.”

HIHI is a national network of innovation hubs in Cork, Dublin, and Galway was established by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Health in 2016. It is supported by Enterprise Ireland and the Health Service Executive (HSE) to drive collaboration between the health service and enterprise to develop new innovative solutions. To do this, they connect enterprise with Ireland’s leading health professionals to validate and pilot products.

The HIHI team consists of people with clinical, commercial, innovation, technical, and design backgrounds with half of the team from the HSE. HIHI is on the ground with a national network across Irish acute sites offering a unique ability to navigate the Irish healthcare system for companies and understand the nuances required to implement a solution.

Eimear says, “Digital health products and solutions, in particular, are quickly becoming the majority of healthcare solutions from what we’ve seen. These solutions are created for unmet needs and challenges in healthcare, which we identify and verify as actual requirements.

“We have an ageing population, which leads to an increase in chronic diseases. This puts a lot of pressure on the system as people have to be monitored all the time. Digital health allows a shift towards community health and at-home care with remote monitoring, where the patient is wearing a wearable device. The data can be quickly uploaded to the healthcare provider so they can make decisions going forward without having to waste time and money.”

Innovation during a pandemic

Steven says that when Covid-19 hit, it kick-started the adoption of a lot of digital solutions, leading to a major shift towards digital health solutions in Ireland in the last six months. HIHI recently triaged 200 innovative healthcare solutions through its Covid-19 Innovation Portal, which helps the healthcare system meet the demands of the pandemic. The HIHI Covid-19 portal was set up to connect businesses with solutions to problems created by the pandemic. “With the healthcare solutions we received, over half of them were digital solutions,” says Steven.

Some of these solutions include the adoption of technology to connect patients and clinical teams, electronic prescriptions, and the Government’s Covid tracker app. All of these have provided a safer environment for people to receive and deliver healthcare.

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It’s about identifying new ways of solving the problems that exist in our healthcare, creating better experiences for both patients and the Health Care Professional.

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“We also ran our HIHI Spark Ignite Innovation competition during lockdown for all HSE staff who have identified solutions to problems. This is the only staff facing bottom up innovation competition for all HSE employees. Over half of those innovations were digital too. Covid-19 really forced connected health and digital solutions to the fore in healthcare.”

But there aren’t just benefits for the health service or businesses in the digital health sphere. There are also plenty of opportunities for digital health to create jobs and export growth.

To date HIHI have engaged with over 575 companies. Of those engagements HIHI selects solutions to address identified healthcare requirements. There are many digital health companies with a product, but only those that address a real validated problem will be successful.

“We work with companies such as Yellow Schedule which created an appointment and booking system to digitally facilitate the scheduling of appointments. Then there is Syncrophi, a digital platform to replace the paper based Early Warning Score system used to monitor patients in hospital. Through a HIHI pilot with the company we have demonstrated that a digital solution reduces error rates and improves efficiencies.”

“These companies are using digital technology to deliver innovative solutions to meet the needs of healthcare. Each of these companies has begun to grow their teams, generate revenue, and ultimately look to scale to other geographical markets. This can only be a positive in the years to come”, Eimear adds.

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The Irish public are mostly digitally literate too. This makes Ireland a strong model for leading in the development, testing, and deployment of innovative digital solutions for healthcare. Taking Ireland's relative size globally, it is the perfect pilot site for digital solutions.

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The future of digital health

HIHI has worked across the health sector with many different Irish businesses to creatively solve problems and improve patient care.

“Ireland is ideally placed to be a world leader in the provision of total digital health solutions,” says Eimear

“We have a highly networked ecosystem and the industry expertise required. This helps us to embrace the convergence between health and the Internet of Things (IoT), which is the future of healthcare globally.”

Steven notes that many of the world's top medical technology companies have invested significantly in Ireland. But a number of exciting, research-based, indigenous companies are also emerging and competing internationally.

“The Irish public are mostly digitally literate too”, he says, “This makes Ireland a strong model for leading in the development, testing, and deployment of innovative digital solutions for healthcare. Taking Ireland's relative size globally, it is the perfect pilot site for digital solutions.”





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