The Role of Champions in Telehealth Service Development

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Background

• Background: This work is part of my PhD on the Uptake and Sustainability of Telehealth Services.

So, when did you say you were going to finish your PhD?

Actually, I didn't mention an exact date ...

Methods

• Qualitative interview study of telehealth clinicians, managers and academics
• Telehealth services selected for maximum diversity
• Telehealth services must have been operating for at least 2 years

Results

• 37 different telehealth services included in the sample: majority real time video to rural areas
• 25 services initiated by champions
• 18 clinical champions, 5 management, 4 academic and 2 technical
Roles of Champions (1)

**Enthusiastic promoter**
- Motivation: one champion could sustain a small scale service on their own
- Driven by desire to improve health services
- Shepherd through transition from project to service

Roles of Champions (2)

**Legitimation:** promoting a set of beliefs about telehealth
- Telehealth is effective
- Telehealth is safe
- Telehealth is normal practice (protocols and standards)

Roles of Champions (3)

**Relationship Building:** champions bring clinicians together
- Creating referral pathways
- Building trust
- Feed demand to enhance sustainability
- Provide telehealth education and training

Loss of Champions

- Continuing implementation problems can lead to loss of champions
- OUCH !!!!!!!
Can Champions be Problematic?

Yes

• Potential problem of champions not wanting to let go and allow the service to develop
• Ongoing reliance on champions is a vulnerability

In Summary

• Champions are important for initial uptake
• Champions operate by promoting clinician acceptance of telehealth
• Where telehealth remains optional, the role of champions continues to be important

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Thank you!