

Abstract.

EHealth plays an essential role in supporting healthcare in today's digital society; it is perceived as crucial for high quality and cost-effective healthcare. However, getting the expected benefits from eHealth has been difficult to demonstrate. There has been a raising interest in adopting eHealth Governance frameworks to obtain re-assurance that investments return the expected results in health care. How IT Governance is implemented within healthcare, the actual impact on strategic alignment and its influence to the information society progress, remains poorly understood. For this purpose we have explored the application of these frameworks within the National Health Service in Scotland and their impact on the following three aspects: eHealth Governance maturity, strategic alignment with healthcare and local progress of digital societies. This research is a longitudinal (2008-2013), involving an exploratory and explanatory multi-case analysis of three representative organisations across Scotland. A combination of empiric methods has been used: semi-structured interviews with implementers, surveys (Strategic Alignment Model), cross-sectoral/national benchmarking based on a literature review and a qualitative analysis of established eHealth progress indicators. Ninety-two participants have been involved across three case studies. The outcomes of this study have been published over a period of 5 years representing a composite thesis based on relevant publications. Results sustain that EHealth Governance is in its infancy across sectors and countries. 80% of the organisations worldwide are in a transition point between a "committed" and an "established" process. Our results support that the more mature eHealth Governance is, the better the strategic alignment between eHealth and health care organisations (HCOs), hence the better progress of eHealth and the Digital Society.

The Strategic alignment is slowly maturing across the organisation (15% since 2008), indicating a faster development than the overall Digital Society (Scotland) progress indicators.

The National eHealth Strategy shows signs of steady progress and very positive eHealth uptake in society with an overall growth of 12% since 2008, despite the deep economical recession within the period of this research.

The conclusions of this study as a longitudinal analysis are limited and more research over the forthcoming years is required. For this purpose, a simplified and adapted method to monitor these trends in future HCOs research has also been provided.