

For the NHS, focusing on quality and productivity in the downturn is essential. NHS Innovations London encourages innovation to stimulate and capture ideas, increase efficiencies and deliver better healthcare outcomes

Efficient medical innovation



DR DAVID C CHILVERS

CEO, NHS Innovations London

Established in 2005, NHS Innovations London (NHSIL) helps to develop innovations from the NHS, explains its CEO, Dr David Chilvers. "The NHS was recognised as having innovations within it, but there was no real mechanism for facilitating their delivery to the marketplace." Previously this was done on an ad hoc basis and opportunities were missed.

NHSIL consists of an international team of experts from the pharmaceutical, diagnostics, device and IT industries who have backgrounds in R&D and business, rather than the NHS. The team's objectives are to "evaluate and develop healthcare innovations, and get them into the marketplace as quickly as possible for patient benefit". It is quite a unique model that should be used more widely, Chilvers argues.

"Essentially, it's about expediting things to market. We get about 300-400 innovations a year that we then review, and rule out those that won't be viable in the marketplace or have little or no value in terms of clinical outcomes. What we do is very objective; it's based on expert knowledge and fast, efficient processes.

"The Xpedite® Innovations Management

process has four different stages of evaluation. The first is the feasibility phase, which takes just seven days to do the first review and around 70% of innovations won't go any further. Then there's a very detailed review, which can include primary market research. In a year, we invest in developing 20-30 projects and outsource their development to organisations worldwide. Finally, we finance early-stage clinical trials, license products out or form start-up companies."

NHSIL finances projects through early-stage development with the Xpedite® Product Development Fund. It receives 100-150 applications per year for grants and finances around 15-20% of the projects up to £100,000. "Everything that comes through here is demand-led. The clinician has seen an unmet clinical need in the environment and has either tried to develop it or has contacted us to develop it."

The Xpedite® London Healthcare Innovations Seed Fund, an equity-based fund that invests in medical start-up companies, is soon to be launched. "This is where a trust or an individual from a trust can come to us with a business plan or business idea. There would be the usual Xpedite® analysis plus further due diligence on that proposal with a view to whether we invest or not."

In 2008, NHSIL launched ATcare, which Chilvers describes as "the UK's first centre for the design and development of assistive technology products to help the disabled

and ageing population lead a more inclusive life". ATcare assists organisations that are researching and developing products, but don't have the means to get their products to market.

Following the Darzi Next Stage Review, legislation was passed by which Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) have an obligation to foster innovation. NHSIL is working with the London SHA "to take some of our principal philosophies and project management from a product-orientated innovation programme and bring that to the management of service improvements". Through the Regional Innovations Fund, NHSIL will be involved in the evaluation of project bids and in facilitating the roll out of successful projects across trusts in London and nationally. As Chilvers concludes, "the principles that we're applying effectively to product innovation, we can apply successfully to service innovation too". ■

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Dr David C Chilvers, chief executive at NHS Innovations London, spoke to Jessica Latter. For more information, please visit www.nhsinnovationslondon.com or call 020 7380 1700



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