

Abstract

The purpose of this research has been to develop strategies to build capacity in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) among the public Health staff as a precursor to implementing successful and sustainable eHealth Systems in Sri Lanka. The two questions this research sought answers were whether the public Health care staff is competent enough to embark on eHealth and if not, how to identify their shortcomings and to build their capacity based on such shortcomings.

The study, carried out in the Sri Lankan context, was of three folds. Firstly, ascertain the current level of basic ICT competencies in terms of knowledge and skills among the public Health workers and their level of preparedness for upcoming eHealth programmes in Sri Lanka. Secondly, delineate and propose basic ICT competencies for a public Health care worker compatible with eHealth programmes. Finally, propose key strategies to bridge the gap in basic ICT competencies in terms of knowledge and skills.

The literature survey included empirical studies in global context including frameworks, road maps and strategies developed by previous scholars. A survey was conducted to ascertain the current level of ICT competencies among grass root level staff of 10 healthcare institutions in Colombo. Results revealed that most of the staff are lacking in basic ICT competencies in terms of knowledge and skills. There is also limited awareness of the current eHealth initiatives in the Country. However, introducing ICT was perceived positively by the majority. It was understood that basic ICT competencies should be improved prior to implementing electronic Health Information systems. Thereby, a set of basic ICT competencies in terms of knowledge and skills for a Health care worker was defined and proposed. The proposed strategies to bridge the identified competency gap include a 'National Level Basic ICT Training Plan' with creating awareness on eHealth, creating master trainers at MOH unit level, training using resources available, ongoing in-service training, proposing necessary curricula changes into pre-service training of the public Health workers and more importantly national level coordination by the Information Unit in Ministry of Health.

In conclusion, the importance of having national level strategies to bring about the desired level of ICT competencies with central coordination is highlighted in this thesis. The proposals are expected to deliver the capacity building up to the mark for successful and sustainable eHealth implementation in Sri Lanka.