

# HealthTech Ireland Conference



Wayne Leitch, Lead Partnership Manager, iQuest & Business Post LIVE; Dr Christian Stafford, Digital Health Sector Lead, Enterprise Ireland; Miguel Coelho, Business Development Director, Oracle Health; Susan Treacy, CEO, HealthTech Ireland Association; Michelle Sullivan, Head of Public Affairs, UK & Ireland, Boston Scientific; and Thomas Sharkey, Healthcare Lead, Republic of Ireland, AWS



Fran Thompson, Chief Information Officer, HSE; Gary Boyle, Patient Advocate; Miguel Coelho, Business Development Director, Oracle Health and Miriam Roche, Interim Director of Informatics/CIO, St James's Hospital, Dublin

Pictures: Maura Hickey

## Building a future for our medical system

Now in its 40th year, HealthTech Ireland's latest annual conference showed that the industry is on the cusp of change which will benefit all of us, writes **Quinton O'Reilly**

The leaders, innovators, movers, and shakers were all present at this year's HealthTech Ireland Association Annual Conference 2022 at Croke Park on Wednesday, May 25.

HealthTech Ireland celebrated its 40th anniversary this year, and the conference reflected much of the progress and innovation that the sector is known for as well as the challenges and many opportunities facing it.

In his opening remarks, chair Ivan Yates mentioned that the day would see them getting down and dirty in every aspect of the health sector and the key theme of collaborating and achieving a bright future together resonated throughout the day.

In the welcoming remarks from Ray Cahill, Chairman of HealthTech Ireland Association and Susan Treacy, chief executive of HealthTech Ireland Association, the importance of working together was key.

"How can we encourage collaborations, and how can we spark and fan the flames?" he asked. "Real change is hard to achieve on your own but great things can come when we work together; the last few years show what happens when you do that."

Treacy mentioned the three legs of the stool that make up this sector – public, private and research – as key to the sector's success.

In his opening address, Tim Hynes, chief information officer, AIB and board member of the HSE, covered the topic of digital innovation and highlighted a critical distinction for all in the sector to know: the difference between invention and innovation.

In short, invention is the creation of a tool or service but how its applied is where innovation comes in. He highlighted how tech should be a catalyst for change and the key elements that allow innovations to be successful. While listing them, he warned against the pitfall of a particular component.

"One crucial thing to do, and where most change fails, is that there must be a shared vision," he said. "It must be something that people feel will make a difference and feel inspired about what we're

going to talk about."

This mindset was reflected in the first panel session on collaboration which featured a star-studded cast. The panel featured Dr Christian Stafford, digital health sector lead at Enterprise Ireland, Dr John Sheehan, radiologist, clinical director & advisor, and Ireland Digital Health Leadership Steering Group, Professor Ronan Cahill, professor of surgery at UCD and the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital (MMUH), and Dr Natalie Cole, head of innovation at Tallaght University Hospital.

Working together isn't just important for sharing data or improving the current system; it's also crucial for those Medtech companies to bring their expertise overseas as you can learn much from other jurisdictions.

"Collaboration is the key to success," said Dr Stafford. "When a company moves into another market for exporting, the first question they're asked is what are you doing in your own domestic market and it's a challenging question

"By themselves, they're not going to transform the theme but if you add all of these together, you're building an opportunity."

### Stronger together

Collaboration appears in many forms and digital transformation is one example. The topic of data interoperability, making the best use of data in systems, was covered in a fireside chat with Thomas Sharkey, healthcare lead for AWS Republic of Ireland, and Mike McCann, Group chief information officer at Blackrock Health.

Shining a light on how complex these systems are now and how important they are, Sharkey mentioned that in the past, there may have been one or two systems handling data. Now there can be as many as 80 different systems working together.

"The proliferation of data is huge, and customers' expectations are driven by everyone using their phones to organise their lives," he added.

"Data interoperability shares that data and lets you access and do some-



Dr John Sheehan, Radiologist, Clinical Director & Advisor, Healthcare Technologist, AI & AR, Mobile Medical Diagnostics, xWave Technologies and Ireland Digital Health; Professor Ronan Cahill, Professor of Surgery, UCD and the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital (MMUH) and Dr Natalie Cole, Head of Innovation, Tallaght University Hospital



Nicola Hickie, Regulatory & Policy Manager at the HPRA; Jane Massy, Senior Business Consultant, SGS Ireland and Una Kearns, Founder, MyPatientSpace



Tim Hynes, Chief Information Officer, AIB and board member of the HSE, gives the opening address



Vicki O'Reilly, Head of Quality, Compliance and Regulatory Affairs at Sisk Healthcare and Deputy Chair for HealthTech Ireland Association



Ray Cahill, Chairperson, HealthTech Ireland Association and Territory Vice President International, Change Healthcare



Marion Briggs, Sustainability Manager, HealthBeacon and Dr Roisin Molloy, Founder and CEO, TriMedika



Mark Coffey, Senior Director International Accounts Johnson & Johnson Med Tech, EMEA; Clare Harney, CEO, HD Health; Ivan Yates, Conference Chair; Susan Treacy, CEO, HealthTech Ireland Association; John Swords, National Director, HSE Procurement and Katrin Ostwald, Senior Business Development Manager, WifOR

thing with it to enable great efficiency. Operationally, we can provide customers and partners with toolkits to allow them to build new offerings and new ways of caring and providing to their population."

"That data isn't just to have better information for medical professionals to work with. A key theme was reducing the overall burden on hospitals and other medical facilities in the long run.

Having a shared standard which allows public and private sectors to share data was one area discussed during the panel on strategic collaboration. The group included Miguel Coelho, business development director at Oracle Health, Miriam Roche, interim director of informatics at St James's Hospital in Dublin, Fran Thompson, chief information officer at the HSE, and Gary Boyle, patient advocate.

Throughout the conference, there were regular reminders that the patient is always at the centre of these decisions. Thompson mentioned that the end-to-end journey with the patient at the centre is key to success.

"You can have a piece of tech that works, but [the big questions are] how does it integrate

across the whole domain and how do we maximise the data we get from it," he added.

Speaking of reminders, Coelho added that the pandemic gave a great example of how collaboration between the different sectors in setting up vaccine management and how it should happen more often, rather than waiting for the next crisis to hit.

This was also hit upon with the panel on value-based procurement featuring Clare Harney, chief executive of HD Health, Mark Coffey, senior director international accounts for Johnson & Johnson Med Tech EMEA, Katrin Ostwald, Senior Business Development Manager, WifOR, and John Swords, national director, HSE Procurement.

Defining what value actually means to each stakeholder is crucial to success as it doesn't mean just financial value but also value in medical, social and economic circles.

It was summed up best by Ostwald who mentioned the health economy isn't just an essential driver of growth and employment but greater wealth too, hence it is very important to build up sup-

port for better health services.

This same issue was highlighted by Lars Dahl Allerup, co-founder and chief executive of Rethink Value, a think tank that focuses on value-based healthcare, in his talk about fostering innovation through procurement.

In a report it released in February 2020, the group found that one of the big problems in healthcare systems' industry scaling was the lack of a common language to describe the value chain and agree what value actually means.

"We found that there was a lack of a common language [around the word value], or sometimes it's the same language but with different dialects," he explained. "Just understanding that the word value means something different to all of us."

While much of it is positive, some significant challenges are coming up for the industry. Regulations and sustainability were two that were covered in the afternoon.

For EU regulations, a panel discussion featuring Jane Massy, senior business consultant, SGS Ireland; Una Kearns, founder of MyPatientSpace; and Nicola Hickie, regulatory and policy manager

with the HPRA, tackled the many issues including standards, compliance, and the unique challenges facing medtech.

Some may be interested to know that many apps that have a medical purpose will be defined as medical devices. If an app is used as part of making a medical decision at any point in time, it becomes a medical device, explained Kearns.

Similar to that was the final panel on sustainability featuring Michelle Sullivan, head of public affairs in UK and Ireland for Boston Scientific; Dr Roisin Molloy, founder/chief executive of TriMedika; and Marion Briggs, sustainability manager at HealthBeacon.

### Carbon literacy

Sullivan mentioned the importance of carbon literacy in not just spotting opportunities but appreciating the scale of other challenges.

"Once you look at what you're all doing with that sustainable focus, you start to see the easy wins and you also start to appreciate the things that aren't very easy," she added.

While there are significant chal-

lenges, there's great reason for the industry to be optimistic about the changes ahead.

Martin Curley, director of digital transformation and open innovation at the HSE, noted in his talk that while Ireland is behind other EU countries, this presents an exciting opportunity to leapfrog them by creating a new foundation and learning the lessons from them.

Key to that is the 'Stay left, Shift left 10x' plan, which will drive innovation forward, but while looking to the future is important, it's good to see that the industry has come a long way since HealthTech Ireland was established 40 years ago.

"Today has demonstrated that we have plenty more ground to cover, and we all want to cover that ground. Many of us even have pretty good maps for that new territory," said Vicki O'Reilly, head of quality, compliance and regulatory affairs at Sisk Healthcare and deputy chair for HealthTech Ireland Association.

The next MedTech Forum, the largest health and medical technology industry conference in Europe, will be held in Dublin in 2023.



Michelle Sullivan, Head of Public Affairs, UK & Ireland, Boston Scientific and Martin Curley, Director, Digital Transformation and Open Innovation, HSE