

Engagement is Key to Success: Professor Peter McDougall, HIMSS-Elsevier Digital Healthcare Award, CMO of the Year

The HIMSS-Elsevier Digital Healthcare Award is a global platform held annually in Asia Pacific, Europe and the Middle East, which recognizes outstanding achievements and innovations in the usage of health information and technology to advance patient care and safety. This year, in celebration of five years since the award was first established, a new category was introduced: the Chief Medical Officer of the Year Award. This award honors senior clinical executives who advocate the advancement of patient safety and quality care, and who are driving the adoption of healthcare information technology in their organizations.

The inaugural CMO of the Year Award was presented to **Professor Peter McDougall, Chief Medical Officer and Executive Director Medical Services and Clinical Governance, Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne, Australia.**

Dr. Peter Edelstein, Chief Medical Officer for Elsevier Clinical Solutions, Europe, Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and Asia Pacific, sat down with Professor McDougall and asked five questions about his thoughts on winning the award and some highlights of his achievements.



▲ Professor Peter McDougall receiving the CMO of the Year Award from Dr. Peter Edelstein at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne, Australia

Firstly, congratulations on being the first recipient of the HIMSS-Elsevier Digital Healthcare Award – CMO of the Year Award! Congratulations to The Royal Children's Hospital for winning the Outstanding ICT Achievement Award as well for your EMR Project Case Study. What were your first thoughts when you were notified that you were the award recipient? And what did it mean for you and the hospital?

McDougall: This award is an extremely important recognition, not only to us but also to our state's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). As a public hospital embarking on such a massive project, we are honored to be supported by the DHHS and our wonderful donors to the RCH Foundation, without whom, such a success would not have been possible. We are glad to share this honor and award with them.



As CMO, you led Royal Children's Hospital through many "firsts" – first Australian hospital to transition to a hospital-wide EMR in a single day, and first to launch a comprehensive patient and family portal as part of the EMR. Those are very impressive achievements, which serve as outstanding examples for provider organizations across Australia and beyond. We are curious to know what your formula to success has been, and how you and the Royal Children's team overcame the complex challenges to achieve all of that in such a short time?

McDougall: Our reason for success can be summed up in one word – Engagement. Such a large-scale project as this is bound to fail unless you engage all your stakeholders, particularly your clinicians. We got our people from across the various departments including medical, nursing, public health and even non-clinicians, involved very early on in the process. We made clear our objectives and desired outcomes from the implementation of an EMR, and discussed the impact it would have on our patients and clinicians. The involvement of our clinicians in the vendor selection process was key, as we essentially gave them the choice of EMR. We appointed a Chief Medical Information Officer and a Chief Nursing Information Officer, who took to each of the 35 departments to speak with and listen to our clinicians, and invited vendors to personally present their solutions and products to them. There was remarkable acceptance due to this approach.

In fact, even after implementation, we kept the feedback loop going. Our executives did revolving ward rounds daily, engaging with our doctors and nurses and raising any issues our staff had with the platform to the vendor and EMR team.

On implementation – we understand that the launch of the EMR happened in a single day. How did you come to the decision to take this aggressive approach rather than rolling out the EMR in phases or department-by-department?

McDougall: There is a bit of history in our chosen approach. When we moved our hospital to its present-day location, we did it in one day. We decided that if we had done it in a piecemeal fashion, it would have given people an “out.” In the same way, had we implemented the EMR ward by ward, those involved might have just chosen to stick to paper and take the easiest way. In comparison, doing it in one day and impacting all clinicians at once meant that there was no alternative and everyone was involved. To roll out the EMR via this method however involved a lot of preparation – not only on the technology front (which took us 18 months), but also the training of our staff to use the platform (which took about six weeks).

“Our reason for success can be summed up in one word – Engagement. Such a large-scale project as this is bound to fail unless you engage all your stakeholders, particularly your clinicians.”



One of the major challenges worldwide with Patient Portals is that simply having portals does not mean that people use them. How have you addressed this issue, and what do you think from the patient perspective has encouraged them to use such portals?

McDougall: Again, we saw how driving engagement from the start plays a pivotal role in getting buy in. A year prior to the portal going live, the CEO and I invited select patients, together with our clinicians and EMR provider, to a series of hosted discussions over the use of the portal. This special committee oversaw the naming of the portal (called “My RCH Portal”), and made decisions on certain usage policies such as patient privacy and confidentiality.

Once implemented, we were extremely upfront with encouraging patients to use our portal. We made use of every available touchpoint – whether it is at our specialist clinics, the outpatients, or even at some of our wards. With our clinicians, who served as a key touchpoint, onboard, uptake far exceeded our expectations.

A key topic that was discussed at HIMSS Asia Pacific this year was “Value-Based Care.” In your opinion, how would you define “value,” and how do you explain “value” to staff, as well as patients, who are trying to improve care?

McDougall: It begins with understanding what ‘value’ means to each stakeholder group. For clinicians, value means ease of access, improved patient care and outcomes. It does not mean money, which is an additional concern for hospital executives. For patients, one of the biggest benefit we’ve been able to deliver to them is the faster and easier retrieval of their medical results via our “My RCH Portal.” This is a significant advancement as we’ve now made it a standard for our clinicians to release patient results within eight days from when the results are available.

Thank you for your time, Professor McDougall. What Royal Children’s Hospital has achieved under your leadership is simply incredible and inspiring! And with role models like you and Royal Children’s, we truly look forward to more healthcare and clinical leaders around the world committing to enabling technology that advances patient-centered care and safety.

The HIMSS-Elsevier Digital Healthcare Awards is a global platform established in 2013 to recognize outstanding thought leadership in the use of health information and technology to advance patient care and outcome.

To learn more about how your organisation can harness clinical decision support solutions to impact care at every stage of the patient journey and promote a culture of quality, visit [Elsevier](#) now.