



An Evaluation of the Eko Digital Stethoscope

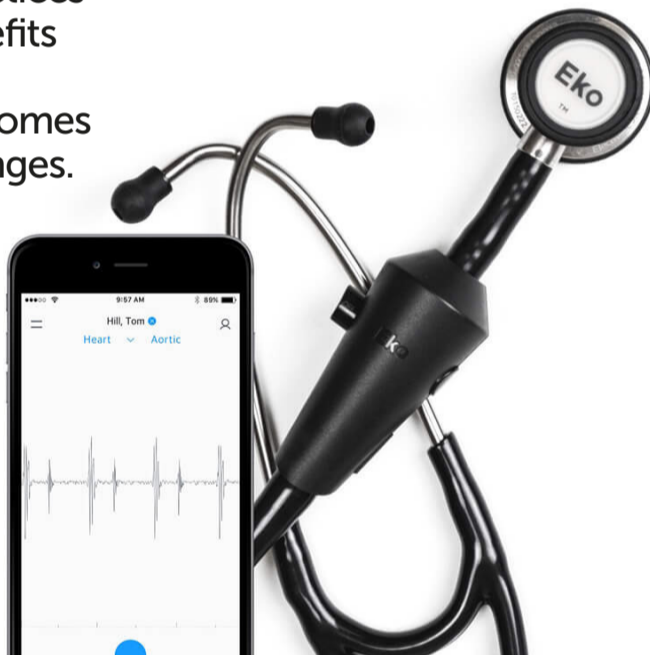
Context and Background to the Evaluation

HI NENC undertook an evaluation to review an Eko Core Digital Stethoscope, an electronic stethoscope that enables amplification, filtering, and transmission of auscultation sound data. The evaluation aimed to assess the device's potential, possibly leading to its expansion into a larger project.

Redmoor Health, a trusted NHS partner, generously gifted 20 Eko Core Digital Stethoscopes to HI NENC for the purpose of conducting the evaluation targeting healthcare professionals in the North East and North Cumbria region.

The evaluation focused on identifying optimal ways in which:

- The device could be employed to address prevailing challenges in primary care.
- To see if the device would assist practices in assessing the supplementary benefits and alternative applications of the technology to enhance patient outcomes and address capacity-related challenges.
- To find out from health care professionals:
 - their motivations for testing the device;
 - utilisation patterns;
 - desired benefits;
 - perceived value;
 - frequency of device usage.



Distribution of Eko Digital Stethoscopes

In total, 17 Eko Core Digital Stethoscope devices were distributed to those who expressed an interest in testing the device. Those who received the device were from across the North East and North Cumbria region and mainly consisted of GPs.

From interviews conducted, the most common reason for wanting to test out the device was centred around being interested in trying new technology and to explore whether new innovations can make a difference in practice.

This highlights the eagerness for some primary care clinicians to engage with new technologies to improve upon already embedded devices.

Some of the key findings include:

- The preference for a digital stethoscope over an analogue one centred on sound quality and the ability to record sounds.
- Respondents expressed a readiness to recommend the device to others, citing its use in training, a recurring theme in interviews.
- Barriers to usage related to technological challenges and battery power, with some acknowledging the user's responsibility to charge the device as needed.
- Stable and sufficient network connectivity is needed especially on home visits from paramedic practitioners in general practice.
- Participants identified potential connections with secondary care through clinical pathways, particularly via sharing recordings with Cardiologists.
- Most respondents plan to continue using the device and recognise its potential. In an interview where a GP mentioned that they won't be using it after the testing period, they have proposed passing it on to a GP with a hearing impairment.

A commonly reported benefit of the device was based around the ability to support with education and training of clinical staff, which also overlapped with the ability to record sounds on the device.

"I think that's a massive advantage in terms of from a teaching perspective as well as developing your own skills and in reinforcing your own knowledge and understanding"

"It's a good tool to review and do case studies with students. You've got the recording and then you can utilise that as part of the case study to reflect on it."