



FOCUS ON: James Jarvis

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What does it mean to be a Chief Analytical Officer in healthcare?

I think the role of a CAO is multidimensional. For me a large part of the role is showing strong leadership around the importance of data and how this can and should be used to drive improvement and to give assurance to the people that commission, regulate and most importantly USE the NHS. Supporting organisations develop a culture where people understand data and want to use it intelligently to drive change is one of the functions of the CAO role and one of the things that I personally enjoy most about my job!

There are some more technical elements in the CAO remit, such as developing a Data Strategy, setting the standards in regards to turning data into useful and actionable insights through the use of statistics, modelling and other more advanced techniques. Making data attractive and engaging for people to want to look at and use is key and again is one of my favourite parts of the role. In order to tell stories with data, it has to be accessible to people and be presented in a way that is appropriate for the audience. Visualising data well is a real skill and thankfully there are some great tools to help with this and to easily open up access to colleagues. Championing the cause for well presented data and encouraging a self-service approach sits with a CAO. I see it as part of my role to influence those around me to adopt good principles for data visualisation and to encourage those outside of my team to be curious about data and to help themselves wherever possible.

Keeping up to date with how innovation and new technologies in the data space can add to our set of tools as analysts, developers, data scientists etc. is increasingly important as developments in this area are moving so fast. Automation is an area that is starting to play a greater role in how data teams function, freeing up analytical time for more value-added activities. Leading change programmes based on these types of technologies is at the heart of what a CAO does. Being an advocate for working smarter, not harder.

What are the key recruitment issues for a CAO over the next 5 years?

Historically, analytical teams in health and care have mainly been reporting on what has already happened and providing trends for what we know will happen such as winter pressures. This doesn't help alleviate the strain on the system, the only way to do that is to start using more predictive analytics and looking at prevention rather than admission avoidance. In order to stop the exacerbation and deterioration of health, we need to move towards approaches such as use of AI and start uncovering the issues we don't yet know about.

For the CAO, in recruitment there is already a large pool of analysts with excellent knowledge of healthcare and pathways with excel, VBA, or SQL skills, but not the scientific skills needed for AI, or they have a pool of data scientists who are expert at Python, but have no concept of how healthcare works. One solution is for the CAO to focus more on retention of staff. By doing a full cross system analysis of analytical and data scientific skills, they can build a core team to support cross system intelligence whilst developing understanding of the longitudinal pathway across all disciplines and how each part of the system impacts their own.

Then using the national competency framework and organisations like Apha to support the analysts to focus on career progression and development with a clear direction where to improve and build on their skills, whether it be developing data science skills, or understanding of healthcare data and pathways.

Such an approach will also build a more satisfied workforce with clear pathways for promotion and advancement whilst being fully supported in achieving their goals.

How to keep a work-life balance while being a CAO?

There are many demands on a CAO as there in almost every role working in the NHS or a public sector organisation, but for me as much as possible its about trying to focus on the things that will add the most value. Its easy to fill your diary with lots of meetings and to be 'busy', but for me its important to feel like the work I do is moving us forward and has some kind of purpose or meaning. This gives me energy and a sense of fulfilment which in turn makes me want to do more. Learn more, develop and grow as a leader, a colleague, a person. I find this motivating and it definitely has a positive impact on my wellbeing. For me having a good work-life balance is less about how much time I spend working vs. not working and everything about how I feel about the contribution I am making to those around me either side of that line.

I am someone with way too much energy, so I make sure that I find time outside of work to run around, lift and jump over things. Also, my family and dogs help too.