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The sustainability of current healthcare systems is threatened by several societal developments, including an aging population, an increase of unmet medical needs and rising healthcare costs. A transition is needed in order to meet these threats and to achieve a proper balance between the demand for care and the capacity to supply it. Entrepreneurs play a crucial role in developing the required sustainable innovations for this structural change. They are able to develop innovations in close interaction within the healthcare context. This paper studies entrepreneurial strategies for the successful development of sustainable innovations in Dutch healthcare. Data comes from semi-structured interviews with healthcare entrepreneurs. Results show that entrepreneurs experience the interaction with the healthcare system context in various ways and act accordingly. Four types of sustainable healthcare entrepreneurs could be identified: isolated, innovative, evolutionary and revolutionary. These entrepreneurial types differ in terms of their beliefs as to whether and how individual entrepreneurs can contribute to achieving structural change in healthcare.

Highlights

- We examine interactions between entrepreneurs and the system context of innovation.
- Entrepreneurs combine economic goals with contributions to sustainability.
- We describe strategies of four types of sustainable healthcare entrepreneurs.
- The types are isolated, innovative, evolutionary and revolutionary entrepreneurs.
- These types differ in beliefs about how entrepreneurs contribute to sustainability.

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