Provincial Addiction & Mental Health

Knowledge Translation Strategies for Different Target Audiences

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Alberta Health Services

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Project team

Project sponsor
Rachel Carr, Acting Manager
Knowledge Exchange, Provincial Addiction and Mental Health

Prepared by
Cassandra Churchill, Knowledge Management Coordinator
Knowledge Exchange, Provincial Addiction and Mental Health

Jason Mumme, Research Officer I
Knowledge Exchange, Provincial Addiction and Mental Health

Contact

Knowledge Exchange, Provincial Addiction and Mental Health
Alberta Health Services
amh.knowledgeexchange@ahs.ca

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Introduction

Knowledge translation (KT) is the production, exchange, and application of research with the goal of improving health systems and the wellbeing of Canadians (Canadian Institutes of Health Research [CIHR], 2020). KT strategies help communicate research findings to ensure that evidence is used in practice. When considering which KT strategies to use, it is important to consider the needs of stakeholders involved (CIHR, 2020). For example, healthcare researchers may create briefing notes or one-page take-home messages for decision makers because they are quick and easy to read.

This document provides strategies that may be used to target different audiences involved in the KT process. It may be useful for internal and external Alberta Health Services (AHS) stakeholders (such as AHS clinicians and researchers, academia, not for profit organizations) to help translate research into practice and inform health initiatives at AHS.

Target audiences discussed include:

- Decision makers
- Healthcare practitioners
- Patients and family members
- The public
- Researchers

The effectiveness of the KT strategies discussed in this document were determined by the evidence levels in the available literature.

Effective	*Successful*
Effective, variable	*Generally successful, but large variations may occur depending on the details of the approach*
Ineffective	*Unsuccessful*
Ineffective, variable	*Generally unsuccessful, but large variations may occur depending on the details of the approach*
Variable	*Findings ranged from successful to unsuccessful*
Lack of evidence	*The strategy was investigated for the given target audience, but insufficient evidence was found to indicate level of success*

Summary of KT Strategies

	Decision Makers	Healthcare Practitioners	Patients & Family	Public	Researchers
Audit & feedback					
Distribution or dissemination					
Education (interactive)					
Education (online)					
Education (outreach)					
Education (traditional)					
Educational materials					
Guidelines for media professionals					
Incentivization					
Information package					
Local opinion leaders					
Mass media					
One-on-one meetings					
Peer-reviewed publication					
Reminder system					
Self-management					
Serious digital games					
Simulation					
Social media					
Tailored summaries					
Toolkits					

Effective
Effective (variable)
Ineffective
Ineffective (variable)
Variable
Lack of evidence

Decision Makers

This includes policy makers, healthcare leadership, and healthcare managers. This may also include patient advocates and community groups advising on policy. [2-15]

KT Strategy	Effectiveness
Distribution or dissemination Passive dissemination of systematic reviews.	Ineffective
Information package Summary of problems and related research evidence following a graded entry format (e.g., 1-page take-home messages, 3-page executive summary, and 25-page report).	Effective
Mass media Organized and deliberate activities using a variety of traditional media channels (e.g., television, radio, newspapers, billboards, posters) to inform, persuade, or motivate populations. May highlight issues that are newsworthy, influence how decision makers think about an issue, or shape public opinion that influences decision makers.	Lack of evidence
One-on-one meetings Face-to-face meeting with leadership, elected officials, or staffers.	Effective
Tailored summaries Summary of a problem and related research evidence (e.g., policy briefs, fact sheets).	Effective

Tips for targeting decision makers

- Use an integrated approach where decision makers can help inform research questions at the beginning of the research process.
- Build links between decision makers and researchers to increase trust and foster a culture of evidence-informed decision making.
- Frame evidence in terms of policy application, implications of implementation, and potential outcomes.
- Highlight information relevant to decisions makers, including:
    - Contextual factors that affect the local applicability of research(e.g., incorporate local data)
    - Information about the benefits, harms, risks, and costs of interventions
- Ensure timely responses to decision maker queries.
- One-on-one meetings may be more memorable for decision makers.
- Use plain language rather than jargon.
- Increase use of white space with bullet points, simple tables, and infographics where appropriate.

Healthcare Practitioners

This includes doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and allied health professionals. [3,10,16-34]

KT Strategy	Effectiveness
Audit & feedback An individual's performance is compared to targets and the results are shared with the individual.	Effective
Distribution or dissemination Passive dissemination of systematic reviews.	Ineffective
Education (interactive) Meetings, workshops, and practical sessions.	Effective
Education (online) Online learning programs (e.g., webinars, online training modules).	Effective
Education (outreach) Trained educators meet with healthcare professionals at the place of practice to provide training, feedback, materials, reminders, and follow-ups. Also known as academic detailing.	Effective
Education (traditional) Conferences, courses, and lectures. May lack active participation.	Ineffective (variable)
Educational materials Basic educational materials with recommendations for clinical care (e.g., clinical practice guidelines, audio-visual materials, electronic publications).	Effective (variable)
Incentivization Financial incentives to encourage implementation.	Ineffective (variable)
Local opinion leaders Individuals in an organization who have substantial influence on the rest of the community use this influence to persuade healthcare providers to adopt a new intervention.	Ineffective (variable)
Mass media Organized and deliberate activities using a variety of traditional media channels (e.g., television, radio, newspapers, billboards, posters) to inform, persuade, or motivate populations.	Lack of evidence
Reminder system Checklists, notices, electronic reminders.	Effective (variable)
Social media Use of web-based technology such as wikis, blogs, podcasts, social media networks, vlogs.	Variable
Toolkits A packaged grouping of multiple KT tools and strategies, where users select the KT strategies depending on their resources or context. For example, a toolkit may include handout sheets, posters, pocket guides, presentation slides, and educational modules.	Effective

Tips for targeting healthcare practitioners

- Avoid overloading practitioners with too much information at once and be mindful of their busy schedules.
- Be clear about how the evidence being discussed will impact practitioners' day-to-day work.
- Build linkages and relationships with practitioners to increase trust.
- Use existing communities of practice and other professional networks to expand the scope and reach of KT strategies.
- Enlist the help of library and information science (LIS) professionals when possible.
- Use plain language rather than jargon.
- When developing toolkits, consider that:
    - Additional efforts are required to ensure knowledge users actively engage with toolkit material development, and move away from passive diffusion of information.
    - There is no evidence on the ideal combination or number of KT strategies and tools to be included in toolkits.

Patients and Family Members

This includes patients and their family members, and may also include patient advocates. [3,10,19,27,35-41]

Note: In many studies referenced, patients and family members were generally recruited from treatment programs. This may have made them more engaged and receptive to these strategies.

KT Strategy	Effectiveness
Education (interactive) Meetings, workshops, and practical sessions. May be effective for reducing stigma.	Effective
Education (online) Online learning programs (e.g., webinars, online training modules).	Effective
Educational materials Basic educational materials (e.g., pamphlets).	Effective (variable)
Mass media Organized and deliberate activities using a variety of traditional media channels (e.g., television, radio, newspapers, billboards, posters) to inform, persuade, or motivate populations.	Lack of evidence
Self-management Promote various strategies for people to take an active approach to managing their health. People may use tools themselves or with the support of healthcare providers.	Lack of evidence

Serious digital games Computer-delivered strategy using games to educate or promote behaviour change.	Effective
Social media Use of web-based technology such as wikis, blogs, podcasts, social media networks, vlogs.	Variable
Toolkits A packaged grouping of multiple KT tools and strategies, where users select the KT strategies depending on their resources or context. For example, a toolkit may include handout sheets, guideline summaries, posters, pocket guides, and educational modules.	Effective

Tips for targeting patients and family members

- Use strategies that are tailored to the individual and involve learning skills and competencies.
- Collaborate with healthcare providers. Patients are more likely to trust in health information if it's coming directly from their healthcare provider.
- Collaborate with community organizations. This may be particularly effective with older adults or individuals living in rural areas.
- Use plain language rather than jargon.
- Be cognizant of cultural differences and sensitivities.
- For patient-targeted toolkits, toolkit content can be tailored by someone with knowledge of the patient (e.g., their nurse).

The Public

This includes members of the public and media. [3,10,21,38,42-54]

KT Strategy	Effectiveness
Education (online) Online learning programs (e.g., webinars, online training modules).	Effective
Guidelines for mass media professionals Reporting guidelines for journalists.	Lack of evidence
Incentivization Financial incentives or disincentives, such as bonuses, exceptions, taxes, or pricing burdens to change health-related behaviour.	Effective
Mass media Organized and deliberate activities using a variety of traditional media channels (e.g., television, radio, newspapers, billboards, posters) to inform, persuade, or motivate populations.	Lack of evidence
Simulation Causing someone to experience simulated effects of an illness. May increase stigma.	Ineffective
Social media Use of web-based technology such as wikis, blogs, podcasts, social media networks, vlogs.	Effective (variable)

Tips for targeting the public

- Successful mass media campaigns:
  - Are usually longer and more intense (more contact time)
  - Use repetitive media messages delivered by multiple channels
- When using mass media for stigma reduction messaging, consider that:
  - Mass media interventions may reduce prejudice, but there is insufficient evidence to determine their effects on discrimination.
  - Messaging with first-person narratives and promoting social inclusion or human rights messages may be more effective in reducing prejudice.
  - Strategies that add a social contact element are more effective; however, social contact alone is not effective.
  - Messaging showing acute symptoms or biomedical messages may increase prejudice.
- Tips for using social media:
  - Social media content should be monitored for quality and reliability.
  - Trustworthiness of information is a barrier to use, but may be addressed by using brief messages obtained from a reputable source and linking to full sources.
  - Using images or videos can significantly improve engagement compared to using text only.

Researchers

Although knowledge translation usually flows from researchers to users, certain scenarios require communicating findings with researchers (for example, during an integrated knowledge translation approach or after identifying research gaps). [55-57]

KT Strategy	Effectiveness
Education (interactive) Meetings, workshops, and practical sessions.	Effective (variable)
Education (traditional) Conferences, courses, or lectures.	Variable
Peer-reviewed publication Publication of research results in peer-reviewed journal articles, which may be open access or restricted access.	Effective
Social media Use of web-based technology such as wikis, blogs, podcasts, social media networks, vlogs.	Lack of evidence

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