

Knowledge Translation: Empowering Health Professionals to Take the Lead

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Context and Setting

The project was undertaken at the Canmore General Hospital, a 21-bed acute care and 23-bed long-term care facility and community care program in the Calgary Health Region with an interdisciplinary staff of 250 health professionals. It is located in Canmore, a rural town of 12,000 located in the Rocky Mountains, 120 kilometers west of Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

Why We Undertook This Initiative

Clinicians and policymakers recognize the need for better systems of knowledge transfer, especially in rural regions, where access to the literature and communication with information specialists remain a challenge. The Practice Enhancement Achieved through Knowledge (PEAK) project explored the use of knowledge brokering to facilitate the integration of evidence into daily practice.

What We Did

PEAK was a 3-year research project funded by a grant from the Canadian Health Service Research Foundation and Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research. Its goal was to empower health professionals in interdisciplinary teams to raise questions from practice, seek evidence-based answers, and create personal learning projects (PLPs) that

enhance practice. Two knowledge brokers (a nurse and a social worker) were appointed to facilitate individuals and teams in the process of creating and sharing PLPs and accessing relevant sources of information. So far, they have assisted in the development and exploration of more than 100 PLPs, one-third of which have resulted in identifiable changes in individual practices, attitudes, interdisciplinary relationships, and care policies. One such PLP has an impact on the way neuroleptics are used and monitored. This PLP was created by rehabilitation professionals who noticed that several dementia patients had severe motor and behavioral responses to recently prescribed antipsychotic medication. The search for evidence-based advice, utilizing the University of Calgary library services and a consulting geriatrician, led to the acquisition of a regional approved practice guideline that could be implemented. The PLP was shared with colleagues on the PEAK Web site and on PEAK notice boards in care units. An interdisciplinary and interdepartmental Lunch & Learn session was held to encourage care providers to relate stories of patients' and residents' responses to chemical restraints. The session helped providers from different disciplines to understand the different perspectives on the use of chemical restraints in the service.

What Did We Learn?

We have learned that integration of new practices is a complex issue that, to be successful, requires skilled facilitation of staff interaction with the research findings and their experiences, not emphasized in the adoption literature. Discussions around PLPs, such as the use of chemical restraints, led to innovative ways of helping care providers to "massage innovations into their practice," where necessary improvising around the guideline. Improvisations, shared and validated by peers, are viewed as "community owned know-how" or tacit knowledge. They lead to a better understanding of evidence-informed practice and its application to clients. More was learned than simply the answer to the question that triggered the PLP. Stories of the application of a guideline to individual clients and their responses continue to be collected and shared. Not only do they constitute the outcome of the PLP, but they also

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lead to more ideas as to how evidence-informed practice can be adapted to meet the needs of clients. Our knowledge brokers, in addition to acquiring information literacy skills, learned how to facilitate generative dialogue by encouraging storytelling (narrative) and ways to build community by encouraging staff interaction.

The results emerging from this innovative approach to knowledge translation indicate that care providers welcome the opportunity to use their skills of practice reflection and value enhancements originating from their practice. Working in this environment motivates professionals to use practice experiences to drive their professional development.