

Closing Personal Reflections by
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Knowledge Translation symposium: Bridging the “Know-Do” gap
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Sitting here this morning I felt like I professionally had come full circle, because my first job was research coordinator at McMaster University when the Centre for Health Economics and Policy Analysis (CHEPA) was set up in 1987. I went there to do research and realized fairly early on that while I found the research process quite interesting, what I wanted to do was to take all this brain power that I was working with and inject it into a policy world. I had spent three years at Queen’s Park in various roles and the word ‘research’ really never came up. When I arrived at Mac I thought, ‘How do I bridge this?’ Nobody cared. Nobody was talking about it. It was not something that anybody was willing to spend any time on. It is not a coincidence that my boss was Jonathan Lomas who later went on to launch Canadian Health Services Research Foundation and put a fair bit of federal and provincial money into this environment. It was not a coincidence that one of the new graduate students was John Lavis who has become world renowned for his work in this area. So my **first lesson: networks do count**. That was a network although we did not think of ourselves as one. All three of us have spent our professional lives trying to talk about and evolve this subject matter.

In 1987 that research brokering process although it was not called that, research brokering just did not exist – was not an academic area. There wasn’t anybody researching it as we have now, there were no experts. The granting agencies did not recognize it. The academic institutions certainly did not recognize or reward it, and it sounds like that still may be an issue.

So when I sit here 20 some odd years later, I do think we have made some progress. We have got some terminology that we recognize, whether it is knowledge transfer, knowledge exchange, knowledge brokers. We’ve got granting agencies convinced that at least some of their money should be dedicated to this exercise, and we have champions in provincial ministries of health who understand the importance of it and also know how to do it. For me, that is progress, so **my second lesson: persistence does count**.

As you know, The Change Foundation has evolved a bit too. We are now working with an explicit assumption that everything we do is about knowledge exchange. We do not use the

granting terminology anymore where something at the end of the research process, or even along the way, is called knowledge exchange; everything we do is about knowledge exchange. And although we do not give specific grants to the activity, we do not fund anything that does not have direct application to policy and that doesn't have a champion attached to the exercise. It is a different way for the Foundation to work, but I am hoping that in the long term it is going to have more impact and we will be able to demonstrate some value added to the conversation that we couldn't have done before. **My third lesson: focus counts.**

So now we have granting agencies on board and we have people in the government who understand the importance of investing in this activity and organizations like The Change Foundation wholly committed to it as a process and an outcome. There is a whole cadre of people now who have been trained over time like yourselves, who think about this brokering and application process and who are constantly looking for opportunities to connect. **My fourth lesson: capacity development counts.**

John Lavis said something this morning that really resonated with me. He boiled it down to interaction and timeliness. I think that is what we at The Change Foundation are about. We are about interaction and timeliness and judging when those things are required. So I hope over the last few years that you have worked with us, we have helped you navigate the environment a little bit as you continue with your work.

Let me thank the Ministry for its financial and intellectual support. The money is important but the intellectual support is equally important for those of us outside of the government. And that has been a long relationship - since 2004 – as Provincial Chief Nursing Officer, Vanessa Burkoski referenced this morning. We appreciate that very much.

Let me also thank our project manager, Hasmik Beglaryan, who has been with this work from the beginning. She has been the one constant through this journey, and without her none of us would be here today.

Lastly, keep us apprised of your efforts and initiatives and safe travels.