Top lessons from knowledge translation symposium: Bridging the "Know-Do" gap

(January 2010)

Introduction

In September 2009, The Change Foundation hosted a symposium to showcase project learning from the 2004 and 2006 Nursing Awards program, a joint partnership with the province's Nursing Secretariat. Nurses from many of the 13 participating project teams, along with policy makers, researchers, health-care providers, knowledge brokers, educators and others came together to discuss effective knowledge translation (KT). The symposium featured keynotes by John Lavis, Canada's Research Chair in Knowledge Translation and Uptake, and Dr. Paula Goering, Director of Health Systems Research and Consulting Unit, CAMH, followed by an interactive session drawing on participants' own experience on what helped or hindered effective knowledge translation. Hear audio clips from event (http://www.changefoundation.ca/audio.html).

Participants voted on key questions using electronic technology to prioritize identified challenges and catalyze debate. The results were compared using weighted ranking[1]:

Participants identify KT challenges & effective strategies by keypad voting:

What are the major challenges to effective knowledge translation?
1. 'lack of resources', which included time, money and skills, (41.1%)
2. 'lack of buy-in' at all levels within and across organizations (18.4%), and
3. 'information overload' (10.6%), related to use of technology, quantity, or quality in which the knowledge is delivered.

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1. In asking participants to prioritize a list of possible answers to a given question, The Change Foundation used weighted ranking methodology where a participant's first choice = 3, second choice = 2, and third choice = 1. The selections of each participant were aggregated and the results ordered by the percentage of the weighted responses each answer option received.

Respondents with different roles assigned different significance to these challenges. While all policy makers, researchers and researcher/ practitioners found 'lack of resources' the number one challenge, the majority of practitioners (66%) thought 'lack of buy-in at all levels' was the greatest challenge (Figure 2).

From your experience, please identify the 'most' effective knowledge translation strategies.
1. 'stakeholder engagement' (30%)
2. 'dedicated knowledge broker/ champion' (26.4%), and
3. 'effective communication between stakeholders' (22.9%) ranked as the top three most effective strategies.

Please identify three unsuccessful strategies.
1. 'complex messages' (32.6%)
2. 'inappropriate messenger' (21.7%) and
3. 'using single strategy for all audiences' (15.9%). These results reinforce the importance of appropriate 'who', 'what' and 'how' in knowledge translation.

Identify three critical factors for effective knowledge translation.
1. 'resources' (23.7%), time, money and skills
2. 'buy-in at all levels' (15.6%), and
3. 'communication between stakeholders.' (14.1%)

Identify three system-wide strategies to improve knowledge translation.
1. 'stakeholder engagement' (22.2%)
2. 'recognition and support for knowledge transfer by funding bodies' (20.7%), and
3. 'resources—time, money and skills' (20%).

Responses to this question varied depending on the professional role and organization of the participant. While researchers would like to see more resources invested in knowledge transfer, policy makers put the emphasis on 'recognition and support for knowledge transfer by funding bodies' (Figure 3).

Breakdown by role:

Stakeholders' priorities vary depending on their professional role and organization. This creates a challenge for focusing on common strategies to improve knowledge uptake. Clear and effective communication between stakeholders is needed to ensure buy-in and support for knowledge translation at all levels.

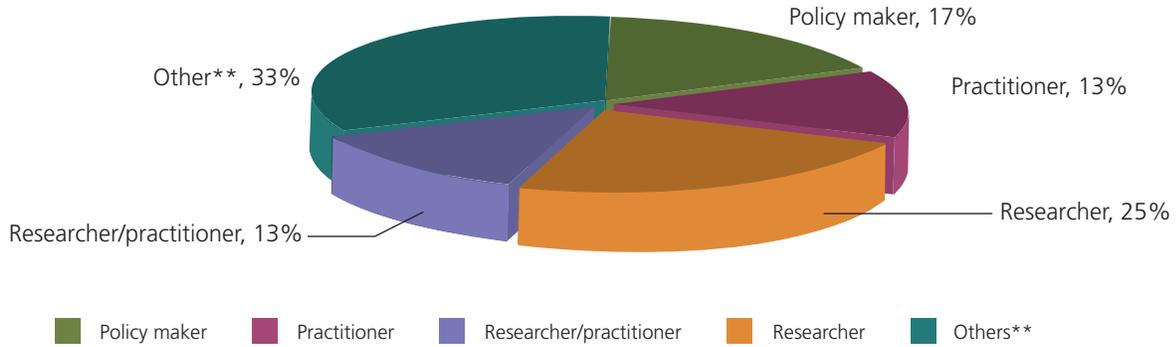**Figure 1. Interactive Session Participants by Professional Role (N=24)**

Figure 2. Three Major KT Challenges

* 'Resources' include time, skills and money
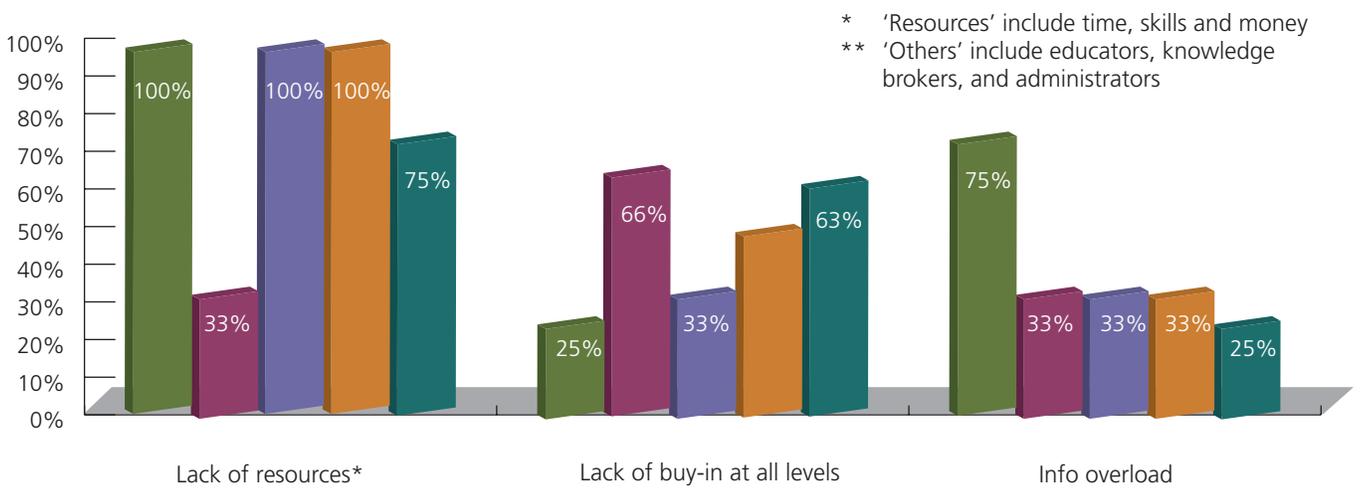** 'Others' include educators, knowledge brokers, and administrators

Figure 3. Three System-wide Strategies to Improve KT