

RTNA Conference Reporting Template

Context

Why is KT important to your organization? What is your role/interest in KT?

I am a PhD student in the Department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathology under the supervision of Dr Monika Keelan. My interest in knowledge translation (KT) started in January 2009 while I was taking a graduate course (Practical Tools for Scientific Research). In fact, KT was an important part of this course. It was the first time I heard this term. I realized how much it is an integral part of research and grant writing, as there is no use for scientific discoveries if people do not understand the science and how it might be applied. I was lucky to be chosen as one of the three student liaisons from University of Alberta for the RTNA (Research Transfer Network of Alberta) funded by the Alberta Innovates- Health Solutions. I successfully completed the Scientist Knowledge Translation Training course provided by the SickKids Learning Institute that was held in Edmonton on September, 28th - 29th, 2009.

I am currently working on a project investigating a bacterial infection associated with gastric diseases among people living in Aklavik, NWT, Canada. This research project was initiated by the residents of this small community due to their concerns of stomach cancer in the community. A simple test revealed that 58% of people tested were infected with bacteria called *Helicobacter pylori*. We isolated this bacteria from gastric biopsies obtained from residents of Aklavik. We are currently investigating the characteristics of these bacteria that may contribute to the clinical outcome of infection, as well as new strategies for treatment.

Knowledge translation is an integral part of my project. Since the project was actually initiated by the community, it is quite clear how much important the research findings are to these people. It is very important to me to know how to share my research findings with others in a meaningful way that would finally improve the health of the residents of Aklavik. Since the Aklavik project is a multi-disciplinary research project, appropriate KT training will help me to learn how to manage different challenges that may arise during our research collaborations.

Session Overview

Please provide an overview of the conference, the intended audience, and the theme.

The theme of the KT10 conference was to discuss the various aspects in the field of KT generation and assessment that would finally lead to achieving its goals in improving health system. The conference discussed the relationship between media and researchers, generation of KT theories and frame works, why we still need to a workable KT framework, what are the risks in applying KT to various projects, how can we assess the success of KT strategy, challenges and rewards of forming sustainable researcher-decision maker partnerships and the challenges in a multidisciplinary research project.

What was really interesting about KT10 conference that experts were talking about their experience in generating, applying and assessment of KT strategies. Some of them had bad experience, others were successful. In my opinion, talking about previous experiences made the conference really successful because you get the opportunity to listen to others and benefit from their experiences.

The audience were:

- KT specialists from various universities and organizations.
- University professors in epidemiology, political sciences, nursery ...etc.
- Health Canada employees in fields related to communication and relationships.
- PhD and master students in fields related to KT.
- Representatives from different funding agencies.

Please choose one session you attended (keynote, panel, workshop, etc.) and provide an overview of the key messages of the session.

I would like to comment on the talk of Andre Picard, the globe and mail journalist.

The key messages of the talk are:

- The relationship between journalists and scientists are very complicated and not always lead to a true story that would serve the public.
- Journalists always consider the world black and white. On the other hand, scientists do not jump into conclusions unless they are certain of. They always have the same conclusion; evidences are not enough and more research should be conducted.
- Policy maker use a strategy of evidence based decisions. In fact, their decisions are consumer oriented (what the public need).
- Evidence means different things to different people. Some scientists define evidence as data that would support their hypotheses. For public, evidence means what they find in practice. On the other hand, policy makers find their evidence in what people need.
- It is possible that a scientist is very smart and does a very good research but his work is not funded because he is not good in playing the political game for money.
- It is very difficult to understand how journalists choose their stories.
- A scientist can choose not to talk to the media but he should accept the risk that his research might not get funded because nobody will know anything about it.
- In order for a scientist to be successful in communicating his research, he should be able to summarize his work in 21 words or less. Such concept is very difficult for many scientists who find it impossible to summarize their life work in 21 words.
- Most journalists have no background in science. Few of them get the opportunity to be funded to get scientific training. A good scientist should have the ability to simplify his research in a lay language that would be understandable to his mother.
- A journalist may completely change the meaning of a scientific research if he did not understand what the research was talking about.

Key Lessons

Overall, what key lessons for KT did you gain from this conference?

- Step by step building a knowledge base is needed to determine which approaches and conditions are relevant for what type of changes in which setting.
- Systems are often responsible for bad quality but professionals are responsible for failure of the system.
- When we look at KT, we should not only look it in terms of dissemination but also in terms of generation.
- High quality systematic reviews are needed for policy makers to make their decision.
- The structure of the organization is very important for the success of KT as it has been found that professional directed interventions are only effective when implanted in well structured organizations.
- There are challenges and rewards of forming sustainable researcher decision maker partnerships. We should carefully manage the challenges in order to get maximum rewards.
- Partnership is a mutual relationship and the growth of such relationship comes from strong connections.
- We have to train researchers to do continuous research evaluation as what somebody might be doing to answer a particular question might not be worth doing one week later.
- When multidisciplinary projects work, they are really wonderful but when they do not they become very nasty.
- The different partners in a multidisciplinary project should be aware of others discipline to avoid conflict.
- For some researchers, it is very hard to establish a multidisciplinary project with them because they cannot appreciate working with others.
- Respect, tolerance and appreciation to others are very important factors for the success of any multidisciplinary project.
- Media should be careful when dealing with problems. Problems should not be presented to the public as if they have been written in a vacuum. More consideration to the background should be done.

Putting It Into Practice

Is there anything you will change your KT practice as a result of this conference?

There was a workshop that was held in the conference talking about using a self assessment tool for estimating the success in KT strategy. The tool depends on answering various types of questions that would finally lead you to understanding how much your KT strategy is successful. When I tried to apply the tool to my project, I realized that there are many things that we do not actually do and it would be very helpful if we could do them. For example, we should have a plan for regular meetings.

I also realized that KT has limitations and I should understand these limitations to deal with them.

One final thing I learnt from the conference, it is very important to be ready to talk about my research project in a very simple way that would make others understand. I found myself doing KT though out the conference when people asked me what my project is about.