

KT Best Practices for Primary Care Researchers with Policy/Decision Makers

Phyllis Marie Jensen PhD, AP(c)¹

Cheryl Levitt MBBCh, CCFP, FCFP²

Tina Karwalajtys PhD(c)²

May Cohen MD, CFPC, FCFP²

¹ Primary Health Care Initiative, Health Sciences Council, University of Alberta

² Department of Family Medicine, McMaster University

Funding

Canadian Health Services Research Foundation

DC1-0468-06

Ethics

McMaster University Research Ethics Board

No conflicts of interest

Background

- Primary health care (PHC) researchers & policy/decision makers have a history of working independently to improve the health of the population
- There is a need for application of PHC research evidence to decision making & health policy
- So it is important to enhance collaboration between PHC researchers & policy-decision makers

Issues for Researchers

- Researchers cannot just publish academically and expect their findings to be used by policy/ decision-makers
- KSTE is largely the responsibility of researchers
- KSTE requires early & consistent attention in research process
- Researchers have competing demands:
 - Lack of incentives for communication
 - Need to move on & obtain new funding
 - Funding agencies requirement for reporting/publication
 - University requirements for promotion & other research demands can shift research priorities & short-change KSTE
- Tools to support effective KSTE can help to build the necessary steps & activities into the research process

Design: Multi-Method

1. Exploratory/Qualitative Phase
 - Focus groups/group interviews
 - Key informant interviews with policy/decision makers & media
2. KSTE Template
 - Designed, tested, refined
3. Workshops for PHC researchers
4. Media training for PHC researchers

Step 1: Determine how KSTE is best achieved between PHC researchers & policy/decision makers & media

1. Identify *local* policy/decision makers
2. Identify *provincial* policy/decision makers
3. Identify *media* personnel partners
4. Invite them to participate in...
 - Key informant interviews
 - Group interviews
 - Focus groups

Step 1 Primary Findings

- Relationship is the key factor in timely & effective KSTE
- KSTE is not a single or final step in the research endeavour
- KSTE should begin early & continue throughout the research cycle & beyond

Challenges

- Policy/Decision Makers face challenges
 - To find relevant (Canadian) research evidence in primary health care
- Many researchers neglect...
 - to develop relationships with policy/decision makers & media
 - & to actively and directly communicate findings

Policy/Decision-maker Views PHC

- PHC research not well funded from traditional sources
- PHC research often published in diverse places...
 - Internet
 - Organizational reports
 - Newsletters
 - Masters or PhD theses
- PHC research available mostly from other jurisdictions
 - Disciplines, Provinces, Countries
- PHC research often difficult to interpret
- PHC research often not fully applicable locally

Policy/Decision Makers Wants

- Informed about work-in-progress & unpublished findings
- Expedited access to expert researchers & Canadian findings
- Enhanced understanding of research to more competently interpret & evaluate research results
- Locally commissioned research relevant to local issues

Policy/Decision Makers Advice

- PHC research should be oriented to practical issues
- PHC research should explore application of findings beyond academic sphere
- Should include...
 - Applied health service research
 - Evaluations
 - Community resource assessments
 - Guidance for allocation of resources

Also interested in...

- Advanced “tip-offs”
- Timely information with implications for practice/policy

Media's Special Interests

Want to know about the wider context of health research

- Controversial issues related to research funding
- Research that did not work out
- “Pros and cons” of an issue
- Stories with a human element

Access to Information

- Policy/decision-makers use research to support decisions
- Want a central resource/clearinghouse to find relevant information
- Their experience is that Internet sources of PHC research are mostly European & American
- Lack of accessible & relevant Canadian research
- Want a PHC research website devoted to Ontario

Communications: Policy/Decision Makers

- Relationships are key factor in timely and effective KSTE
- Strong relationships between researchers & senior policy staff are crucial for communications on relevant issues & research questions
- Suggest a directory of experts who can be contacted directly
- Charge researchers with the responsibility of contacting them
- Suggest arranging casual meetings & “events” to share research findings
- Suggest creating a formal process of regular research updates

Communications: Media

- Want collegial relationships with expert researchers
- Want researchers to take initiative because they are not as visible as media personnel
- Want & expect PHC research colleagues to advise & direct them to the best resources for stories

Recommended Communication Formats

- Robust, statistically sound information
 - Useable formats
 - ✓ One page
 - ✓ 16 point
 - ✓ Max 3 items
- Language can be a problem
 - Lack of common terminology
 - Obtuse language
 - Specialized and clinical ‘jargon’ interferes in effective communication
- Timely, plain language executive summaries in large print and well-spaced for visual clarity

Step 2: Develop & Deliver

- Research template for KSTE
- Workshop training in KSTE
- Media training for KSTE

Step 2: Develop

- KSTE template developed based on...
 - Literature
 - KT conferences & national workshops
 - Findings in Step 1

Step 2: Workshop in KSTE

- Full day workshop *off campus*
- Dynamic speakers with extensive & successful research records working with policy/decision-makers
- Small group discussions
- Hands-on 'plain language' sessions to increase skills in clear communication
- Hands-on applying KSTE template to current research
- Evaluation of workshop & KSTE template

Knowledge Transfer Template

Phases of research & focus

- Early
- Funding
- Research
- Initial Results
- Completion

Early Phase	What is the KSTE question?	Getting ready for audience & Getting audience ready for info	Specific KSTE Strategies
Contemplation			
Pulling the team together			
Clarifying the research question			

Funding Phase	What is the KSTE question?	Getting ready for audience & Getting audience ready	Specific KSTE Strategies
Funding Sources			
Proposal & submission			
Funding Success			

Cautions & Concerns KSTE

- Intellectual Property Rights & Copyright
- Academic freedom
- Accountability of policy/decision makers and researchers in releasing & publishing research
 - inappropriate early releases
 - unauthorized publication of results
- ‘Broken’ relationships due to changing personnel
 - Government
 - Media
 - Dissolving organizations, agencies and institutions
- Maintaining links with no-longer relevant partners & collaborators

Step 3: Media Training

- Full day with Main Pro C credits
- Simulated interviews with feedback for..
 - Radio
 - TV
 - Newspaper

Take-home messages

- Research Findings
 - Be concise
 - Rehearse material
 - Stick with what you know
 - Don't get side-tracked or tricked
- Personal Appearance
 - Keep it simple
 - Wear Plain colours

Ethical Issues

- What are ethics of close relations with policy/decision makers and media?
 - Potential conflicts of interest to protect the integrity of research
 - Possible preferential communications
 - Possible preferential funding advantages
 - Requests to engage in projects that undermine autonomy and academic freedom
- Policy/decision makers may unduly influence research questions to avoid political fallout associated with certain research approaches and findings
- Broken relationships can “blacklist” researchers or policy/decision makers
- Changes in political representation can result in research not getting funded or published

Conclusions 2

- The KSTE Template provides a systematic approach throughout the research process
- PHC researchers need to be aware of ethical challenges associated with partnering & collaborating in research KSTE

More information or template contact
phyllis.jensen@ualberta.ca