

“Ethics Considerations in Your KT Activities: Increasing the Odds of Success”

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By

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Knowledge Transfer: Raising the Stakes for System Change

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Importance of Ethics

- KT – “social ownership”
- Ethics – a way of understanding and examining moral life (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001)
- Ethical analysis in KT
- Role in Policies & Practices which promote KT
- What ethical issues have you faced?



TCPS Principles for Research

- Human Dignity
- Free and Informed Consent
- Vulnerable Persons
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Justice and Inclusiveness
- Balancing Harms and Benefits
- Minimizing Harm, Maximizing Benefit



Ethics Principles

As Common Morality:

(HTA: Andersen, 2003; Braunack - Mayer, 2006; Hofmann, 2005; Reuzal et al., 2004; Wild, 2005)

- Beneficence
- Non-maleficence
- Autonomy
- Justice
- Solidarity

Ethical Knowledge Transfer:

(HR: Harmon, 2007)

- Reciprocity
- Recognition
- Utilization



Ethics in KT

- Social Shaping
- Valuing *different kinds* of knowledge
- Role of Community/Public
- Integration of ethical analysis



The Knowledge

- What is the knowledge to be transferred?
 - **Moral challenges**
 - Topic area
 - Methods: Is the RCT the only gold standard?
 - **Characteristics**
 - Function, purpose, implied responsibilities, potential harms
- What are the stakeholder interests?
 - Patients/clients/citizens
 - Producers
 - End-Users



Role of Consumer

- Ideal –
 - provision of evidence-based information
 - involvement in shaping what questions are pursued and how the knowledge is applied
- Issues –
 - difficult to find relevant research findings of good quality
 - ethical issue in using poor quality information yet often used if no better data are found



Role of Consumer cont'd

- How to involve in shaping research questions and findings? – PAR
- How to involve in what knowledge is selected for transfer? – priority setting
- How to involve in knowledge application in different contexts? – implementation, evaluation



Challenges for the Researcher

- Knowledge that is relevant to the end-user
- Skills in engaging non-researchers
- Ethical issues re: novice researchers
- Rigour, respect and responsibility:
 - balance between listening and informing
 - make clear the assumptions, qualifications or caveats, underpinning arguments

(Universal Ethical Code for Scientists, 2005)



Challenges for the Practitioner

- Do front-line professional staff have the confidence and capacity to review evidence and implement it in their practice?
- Is there respect for balancing work pressures with involvement in developing & applying new knowledge?
- Are front-line staff (including KBs) aware of and accountable to specific ethical policies in their projects?



Challenges for Managers

- Capacity for “Evidence-informed” decision making
- What are the ethics of using resources to develop and facilitate “communities of learning” re: KT?
- Is respect for an entrepreneurial spirit encouraged so that knowledge is taken and used effectively in context?



Challenges for Managers Cont'd

- Is there a valuing of time (and use of other resources), debate and dialogue, 'lessons learned' in the local application of new knowledge?
- Shift in power relations between individuals (knowledge workers) and organization requires:
 - values re-alignment
 - role evolution from manager as controller → coach / co-worker → servant and facilitator (Harman, 2007)



Challenges for the Institution

- Does the institution have a policy on organizational ethics and to what extent do KT activities fit?
- How are values conflicts dealt with in the introduction of new technologies/knowledge?
- How are ethics dealt with in context of benefit of KT to the institution vs benefit to society?
- Are explicit and transparent policies of resource allocation in place?
- How does the institution handle the ethics of making money privately by direct commercialization from publicly funded research?



Challenges for the System

- Integration of social-ethical reflection
 - at what point are costs of applying knowledge unacceptably high compared to benefits
 - priority setting is value-laden and complex, not based on clinical criteria alone
 - use of objective information (research) to reconcile expert and lay perspectives
 - ethics dialogue can facilitate this discussion and raise awareness about new knowledge



Challenges for the System cont'd

- Conceptualization of KT research, education and KT policies and practices to include ethics
- Integration of KT and ethical considerations at highest levels in decision-making
- Consistent approaches which identify ethical risks and manage those risks



Summary

- More critical thinking and research is needed to articulate the ethical frames within which KT activities occur
- Increasing your odds of success in KT requires attention to relationships and cultural values that underpin how work gets done
- A focus on ethics can facilitate this work



What ethical issues have you faced in relation to your KT work?



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