

Strategies for Disseminating Systematic Reviews

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Project Update 2001-2003**

This project, funded by The Canadian Institutes of Health Research, was being conducted by Dr. Maureen Dobbins at McMaster University, School of Nursing as well as at the City of Hamilton Public Health and Community Services Department.

This project responded to a lack of knowledge transfer and uptake research generally in the health sector, and specifically within the field of public health/health promotion. It was also in direct response to the knowledge that health professionals continue to rate research applicability to practice as being very low. The investigators contend that consultation with those using the research findings is paramount, so that the product that is disseminated is relevant, timely and presented in a way that is easy to use for the target audience.

Objectives:

The research team, based out of McMaster University, worked on five objectives:

1. Identify, appraise, and make available recently-completed, methodologically-sound reviews of health promotion and public health interventions published from 1985 to the present
 2. Conduct a comprehensive literature review and consult with key practitioners in Canada to learn how decisions are being made in these respective organizations, and determine the best ways to summarize and disseminate review findings
 3. Consult with graphic design and marketing experts to prepare and market dissemination material
 4. Conduct focus groups of practitioners to obtain feedback on the dissemination strategy to be pilot tested in the fall of 2002 with Canadian decision makers: medical officers of health, public health managers and directors, health promotion managers, and health policy makers at provincial and federal levels
 5. Identify public health and health promotion interventions that have not yet been systematically reviewed and enlist individuals to conduct these reviews
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Progress:

- Electronic searching of 7 databases from 1985-2001 was completed and updates to electronic searches have been conducted up to summer 2004. Handsearching of 21 main journal titles is complete and handsearching of reference lists of relevant reviews is ongoing.
 - Project staff consulted with a marketing and web design firm to develop the registry online. A demonstration of the searchable registry, developed with support from the CIHR Institute for Population and Public Health, was originally available at www.health-evidence.ca before the functional site launch.
 - Over 50 individual interviews were held across Canada with various levels of public health decision makers. The results of these interviews showed strong demand for a registry of reviews evaluating public health and health promotion effectiveness evidence to be made available online.
 - Based on interview results, a dissemination strategy was created, and then evaluated using focus groups during the fall of 2002. Nine focus groups were held between October and December 2002 in provinces across Canada: Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia.
 - Results from these focus groups, as well as individual interview and registry data formed the basis for a successful grant proposal submitted to CIHR in the Open Grants competition in April 2003. This follow-up study will evaluate the impact of various knowledge transfer strategies among public health decision-makers in Canada. This study commenced October 1, 2003. Investigators will test three specific dissemination strategies ranging from passive to active, and will also test a knowledge broker model.
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