

Theme 4: Building capacity for effective implementation

Knowledge translation for researchers: Building capacity in Australia

Increasingly, researchers are required to demonstrate research impact, translation of research processes and results, and engagement with end-users of research. As a result, research agendas are accompanied with a requirement that research is planned and produced to ensure relevance and usefulness to policy and practice decision-making. Researchers often engage with decision-makers in various stages of research, however these interactions are often informal and tend to focus on dissemination. Emerging evidence suggests that Knowledge Translation and Exchange strategies (KTE) may hold promise for facilitating research use and engagement to support better public health implementation and outcomes.

Public Health Insight, at the University of Melbourne, has developed a short course to introduce researchers to the core components of KTE as it applies to the research process. Several methods were used to inform the objectives of the course: 1) A review of existing KTE capacity building initiatives for researchers 2) Literature and theory review and 3) Interviews with public health and social science researchers.

The reviews of existing initiatives and literature revealed common components of KTE capacity building in Canada and the UK. Training in research communication and dissemination is more readily available. A combination of KTE theory (e.g. strategies for “push”, “pull” and “exchange”) is likely to be most beneficial when combined with strategies for engagement with different audiences (e.g. decision-makers, end-users, communities). Key themes were discussed with interviewees. Interview findings confirmed interest in KTE skill development, and emphasized a need for practical strategies for building relationships with decision-makers. Assessing impact of KTE activity was also thought to be important.

Contemporary issues for researchers in doing ‘research translation’ and engagement have been identified. A short course is being developed to address these issues and offers practical strategies to strengthen KTE planning, broaden engagement with decision-makers, and deliver effective communications through active dissemination.