

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION AIC 2016: #103

1. Title:

Implementation leadership – how to be transformational at the top?

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3. Abstract text:

In 2004, Trish Greenhalgh and colleagues in their highly acclaimed review 'How to Spread Good Ideas' (Greenhalgh et al., 2004) emphasised that leadership is a 'compelling concept' identified by many as a potential antecedent of high quality implementation. However, the empirical evidence that could support this assumption showed to be weak and ambiguous and caused the authors to call for a more consistent and theoretically informed use of measures. While the number of studies on implementation leadership has grown since then (Aarons, 2015; Aarons & Sklar, 2014; Birken et al., 2015; Birken, Lee, & Weiner, 2012; Gifford et al., 2012; Palinkas & Aarons, 2009; Reichenpfader, Carlford, & Nilsen, 2015), the field of implementation leadership in general is in its infancy still and – among others – characterised by 'definitional imprecision' and 'conceptual inconsistency' (Reichenpfader et al., 2015).

Executive implementation leadership in particular – strategic leadership executed at the top of an organisation – appears to be a dimension of leadership that is generally neglected in the implementation science literature.

This presentation will therefore focus on two pertinent questions: What is known about the effectiveness of executive leadership skills, behaviours and activities in human services? And what role do they play in implementation practice?

In discussing potential answers to these questions, results from a scoping review synthesising the findings from 113 leadership studies conducted across education, health and social welfare will be presented. The implications of these findings for implementation practice will then be considered against the background of current and central discussions within implementation science and the field of change leadership.