

# Knowledge transfer: what is it, and why is it so important?



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## Our mission

- To support evidence-based decision-making in the organization, management and delivery of health services through funding research, building capacity and transferring knowledge



## CHSRF objectives

- To enhance the quality and quantity of research that responds to the needs of health system decision makers
- To get needed research into the hands of health-system managers and policy makers in the right format, at the right time, through the right channels



Canadian Health Services Research Foundation  
K N O W L E D G E  
T R A N S F E R  
...making research work

## CHSRF objectives – cont'd

- To help health system managers, policy makers and their organizations to routinely acquire, appraise, adapt and apply relevant research in their work
- To bring researchers and decision makers together regularly to understand each other's goals and professional culture, influence each other's work, forge new partnerships



## The foundation

- Independent, not-for-profit, national organization
- Established with federal endowment in 1996 to fund applied health services and policy research, researchers and promote use of findings
- New endowment (1999, 2003) for nursing research and researchers, and to train decision makers and their organizations to apply research findings

## Our philosophy

- Partnerships between research producers (researchers) and users (decision makers) are key for applied research
- Linkage and exchange activities enhance the relevance of the applied research and its potential use



## What is this “LINKAGE AND EXCHANGE” ?

- It is about bringing communities together in a variety of ways in order that they (a) understand each others' goals and professional cultures, (b) influence each other's work, and (c) forge new partnerships.
  - CHSRF Annual Workshops
  - Invited Exchanges
  - Post Romanow



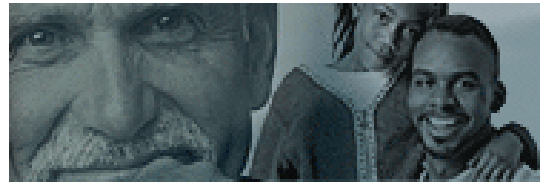
## Role of decision makers

- Fund only in priority areas identified by research users
- All funded projects must include decision-maker partners
- Many projects are decision-maker led
- Funding programs to be increasingly targeted at decision makers
- All review panels are a mix of researchers and decision makers



## What do decision makers need?

- To be able to easily find research or researchers when needed – and know when they have such a need!
- Easy access to research results which are synthesized, high quality, relevant, comprehensible and effectively presented
- To be able to incorporate research evidence effectively with other evidence in decision-making processes



## Motivations to improve research use

- Enhance accountability to stakeholders
- Enhance objectivity and fairness of decision-making processes
- Improve quality of decisions
- Enhance health outcomes



## What is knowledge transfer?

- The CHSRF defines knowledge transfer as:  
**the outcome of collaborative problem-solving between researchers and decision-makers. Effective knowledge transfer involves cultivating linkages and exchanges between decision-makers and researchers, and results in mutual learning through the process of planning, producing, disseminating and applying existing or new research in decision-making.**



## Why is knowledge transfer so important?

- CHSRF believes that effective knowledge transfer is important because it enhances evidence-based decision making in the health services field.

## Is knowledge transfer relevant in all research?

- The goal of most health services research is to bring about change in the healthcare system – to make something better, find the best way to do something. This is the part of the research world in which knowledge transfer is important.
- There is research which is meant primarily to increase knowledge. The pursuit of knowledge has been and will continue to be an important focus of the research world. Knowledge transfer to decision makers is less relevant for this kind of research.

## Is knowledge transfer relevant in all decision-making?

- Decision-makers face all kinds of decisions, some of which are difficult to make because of a lack of information. These are the kinds of decisions where research evidence can play a role and where knowledge transfer becomes important.
- There are many other kinds of decisions, however, where a lack of information is not a factor. These include decisions that are essentially choices between values or other kinds of tradeoffs. Research evidence does not often play a role in these kinds of decisions and knowledge transfer is less relevant to them.

# DISSEMINATION and KT





## What is dissemination?

- Dissemination is only one element of KT
- Effective dissemination goes well beyond traditional means of making research results available such as publication in academic journals and presentations at academic conferences.
- Dissemination is an active approach, targeted towards decision makers who can use the research results and crafted in a way that encourages them to factor the research implications into their work.



## What's wrong with publishing in academic journals and giving presentations at conferences?

- Nothing at all. For researchers, these are legitimate ways to build and maintain professional credibility and standing, share ideas with colleagues and encourage scientific debate and further research.
- However, if a researcher wants his or her research evidence to help bring about changes in policy or decision making, then confining dissemination activities to the academic world is not enough. Policy makers and decision makers also need to be reached.

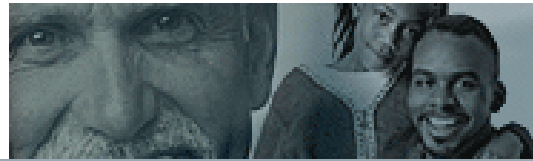
## Is dissemination the same as knowledge transfer?

- Dissemination is an activity that, pursued with the three other basic activities in a research collaboration (i.e., planning, producing and applying), within an atmosphere of linkage and exchange, helps to ensure effective knowledge transfer. It is not knowledge transfer in itself.



## What are the common barriers encountered in health knowledge transfer?

- Since effective knowledge transfer is about collaboration between researchers and decision makers, the most common barriers to this process are all about communication and understanding.
  - Cultures
  - Environment
  - Language
  - Methods
  - Issues and challenges in each world



## What are the best strategies for transferring research findings?

- This question is linked to the previous question about the barriers to KT. Too frequently, the issue of “transferring research findings” occupies centre stage, while true knowledge transfer is neglected.
- The best strategy to impact policy with research is to engage in full-fledged knowledge transfer – and this involves much more than dissemination and one-way communication.



## What research questions in this area are emerging for knowledge transfer research?

- Evaluation of KT efforts
- Best (and worst) practices
- Lessons from other sectors and disciplines
- New ways of 'doing' KT



## What are the challenges to conducting research in knowledge transfer?

- Capacity (researchers and DMs)
- Lack of consistency in definitions
  - Synonyms (KM, KT, KE)
  - Multiple meanings for single terms (dissem = KT)
- Funding for KT research
- Lack international partnerships
- Lack of status
- Lack of interdisciplinary teams