Author’s response to reviews

Title: The effectiveness of knowledge translation strategies used in public health: a systematic review

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Version: 3 Date: 24 July 2012

Author’s response to reviews: see over
Reviewer's report #1

Title: The effectiveness of knowledge translation strategies used in public health: a systematic review

Version: 2 Date: 12 June 2012

Reviewer: Laure Perrier

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for the attention given in addressing the review comments. The manuscript reads very well. Below are 4 minor revisions,

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Abstract & Methods: It is either the Cochrane Library or the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews and should be changed accordingly. The authors have changed to the "Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews" as the reviewer indicates.

2. Methods: Environmental scan document (Anderson 2009) does not describe Methods. Although the statement is re-worded, it is still not possible to judge if the scan was exhaustive since nothing is reported about the Methods - few intervention studies may have been found simply because the Methods were poor, not because they were not present. This statement has been removed as the reviewer indicates and another citation or reference has been added (Pg 6 Ref#13).

3. Discussion: If only one reviewer was used to extract data, the statement in Strengths and Limitations that Cochrane methodology was used should be removed. This statement has been removed as the reviewer indicates.

4. Methods: The search is more than 1 year old and should be updated before being published. The search either needs to be updated and the manuscript revised, or the authors must provide valid justification for only looking at 10 years of literature. New guidelines for Cochrane reviews is that reviews should either be updated if at the time the review is submitted, the search was more than six months old; or include a commentary to explain why this is not the case. While this is important in some areas of research, the authors of this review feel this is not the case for our topic. We feel it is too early to update the review for two reasons.

The first is that the authors do not feel there will be an outstanding number of existing related literature, given that the ten year inclusive search only found six related studies. The authors have therefore provided rationale in the manuscript for searching the past ten years (See page 6-7 of manuscript).
The second reason is related to the extended period of time it takes to locate KT literature. Terms for related concepts are often used interchangeably and definitions are unclear, which makes information retrieval related to the field of KT very difficult (See page 5-6 of the manuscript for more on this issue). Hence our search which yielded over 60,000 hits after de-duplication. The screening process alone took several months to complete and the authors feel that updating the review this soon would take another extended period of time.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests

**Reviewer's report #2**

Title: The effectiveness of knowledge translation strategies used in public health:

a systematic review

Version: 2 Date: 30 June 2012

Reviewer: Neale Smith

Reviewer's report:

The authors of this manuscript have done an effective job of responding to the reviewers’ comments. The following I think are particular strengths of the revised manuscript: clear indication that, giving the limited number of studies involved, few if any strong conclusions can be drawn; it is clearly indicated how many of the primary studies are related to each claim; the methods section is made more clear and readable with the use of sub-headings; strengths and limits are nicely described.

I have perhaps a couple of minor quibbles, as noted below, which the authors can address if they feel appropriate, but otherwise I am happy to see this proceed to the publication stage.

• Page 7: the authors state that they used EPOC filters to search for “relevant study designs”. I wonder what these designs are. They are identified later (pg 9) but perhaps this point is the right place to provide that information? The authors have kept this information in the inclusion criteria but specified on pg 7 where the reviewer indicates: (see inclusion criteria). Further, whether here or on page 9 as present, it might be worth noting that the filters exclude qualitative and mixed method studies—this serves to set
up the Conclusion claim (pg 24) that valuable information could be obtained from such literature. (The authors have now specified on pg 9 that the designs mentioned were excluded from the review).

•Page 12: The paragraph which begins with “KT strategies...” describes data extracted from the 5 included studies, but the information from Ref #23 does not appear to be provided here, and I think for completeness sake it should be. (The authors have added information from Ref #23 as the reviewer indicates).

•Page 14: the authors might specify what measure of “change in knowledge” was used in the Barwick et al study. (The authors have specified on pg 14: "Barwick et al. [21] was the third study that evaluated changes in knowledge by administering a 20-item true or false questionnaire measuring participants knowledge related to the use of an evidence based tool recently introduced into practice"

•Page 16: the authors suggest that an intervention of one day in length may be “too short” to affect practice—while that seems not unreasonable, the claim would be stronger if there was a reference from the literature to support it The authors agree the claim would be stronger if a references from the literature was available to support it however no such literature was found. To be clear it was a speculation the authors wrote the duration "may be" too short to affect a change in practice.

•Page 21: the authors suggest that in their review they found “culture” to be an important influence on research use—it wasn’t clear to me which of the 5 studies they were relying on to support that claim ... but I may have missed it, I admit The reviewer must have missed this claim and can find this information on pg 15 ref #5. " Also observed was that the use of knowledge brokers along with access to the online registry of pre-processed research evidence showed a trend towards a positive effect when organizational research culture was perceived at baseline as low. However, health departments with a low organizational research culture only benefited slightly when they received the tailored and targeted messaging plus access to the online registry, yet showed great improvements when the research culture was high"

•Page 23: first full paragraph... I do not think that use of self-report measures is “inherent” to KT literature and would ask for a less deterministic word to be employed here The authors have changed the word "inherent" to a "common limitation".

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.