Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 1 Date: 10 April 2012

Reviewer: Laure Perrier

Reviewer’s report:

The authors have selected an intriguing topic and done an exhaustive job of searching the literature. This manuscript requires some revision and could be strengthened with additional detail to the methods, along with attention to grammar and writing for the whole manuscript. In particular, the authors should consider:

Major Compulsory Revisions

Overall

1. It is suggested the paper be edited for grammar and writing. Please note the examples given below do not encompass the full extent of issues that should be addressed within the manuscript:
   • The grammar in the manuscript needs attention. There are numerous errors – one example is the over-use of semi-colons.
   • The writing in the manuscript also requires attention. One example is the over-use of ‘however’: e.g. In Background: 1) “However, translating best available research evidence into programmatic change is a complex process.” – Consider using: Translating best available research evidence….; 2) “However, this is the only related systematic review….” – Consider using: This is the only related systematic review….

Background

1. Last paragraph: The first 3 sentences need to be re-considered – These are taken from a talk and speakers can make bolder statements (e.g. keynote speakers are meant to offer provoking ideas; an audience can more easily distinguish they are giving an opinion, etc.). Manuscripts do not offer the same context and must rely on factual statements that can be referenced with evidence.

Methods: Data Sources

1. Second paragraph:
   • Ciliska is identified as doing the environmental scan but is not an author on the document referenced.
   • Environmental scan document (Anderson 2009) does not describe Methods. For this reason it is not possible to: 1) determine if the scan was exhaustive; 2)
determine if the scan included searches of literature databases that would include research studies (9 of the 10 documents identified were reports) - Based on this, it does not support the statement that there are few high quality intervention studies.

Methods: Data abstraction
1. Clarification and more details are needed in the reporting of the first level of screening:
   • Was accelerated screening used?; or
   • Did agreement need to be reached before the full-text was retrieved?
2. At the second level of screening: What was done if there were discrepancies in agreement? Does the statement at the end refer to data abstraction only, or to screening as well?
3. The authors state in the manuscript they followed Cochrane methods: If this is the case, data abstraction should be done independently by 2 reviewers rather than one person doing data abstraction and having a second person verify the information. Given there were only five studies included, this seems feasible to implement.

Discussion
1. The first two sentences lack impact due to poor writing. Writing requires more attention here to make the Discussion more effective.
2. Exposure or ‘dose’ of the intervention: If the section is about the length of the intervention, it is best to simply state this, e.g. Exposure or length of intervention. If ‘dose’ requires quotes, this creates confusion with regards to its meaning. Also, ‘dose’ is inconsistently written with and without quotes.
3. Hanbury study: Authors state the educational session “…appeared to be only one day in length”. This information needs to be verified before reporting on it.
4. “Internet….allows providers to study independently, for little or no cost”: This statement needs a reference. Online courses can have registration fees that may not universally be considered ‘little’.

Funding
1. This should be reported by the authors

Flow Chart (Figure 1)
1. Give reasons for why 341 articles were excluded, e.g. not a relevant population, etc.

Minor Essential Revisions

Background
1. The reference to the Stone and colleagues systematic review: Consider being more explicit about this review, e.g. that their findings are within the context of screening related to immunisation and cancer. Without this contextual...
information, referring to this review is confusing and less convincing that the current systematic review is unique and necessary.

2. Italicize and use quotes for CIHR definition of knowledge translation

Methods: Data Sources
1. Second paragraph:
   • For the statement, “…in accordance with experts….”: The experts need to be identified – it is unclear if the authors mean Ann McKibbon here.
   • There is a focus on Canadian references and context. If the authors wish to focus specifically on the Canadian context, this should be stated explicitly –
   • If the focus is global, references supporting this need to be offered. The manuscript is more novel and impactful if presented within a global context
   • EPOC should be identified as a group within the Cochrane Collaboration

3. Identify what is meant by ‘limited results’ when searching trials registry at EPOC, e.g. list the number of citations.

4. The methodological filters from EPOC are not validated – since they are no longer available on the EPOC website this suggests they should not be used

5. The “online registries of research relevant to KT or public health” need to be identified

6. The conference proceedings, etc. need to be identified, e.g. which sources?

7. The date the search was conducted should be reported

8. The manuscript states the Cochrane Library was searched. The Additional Files list only the Cochrane Systematic Reviews were searched. This needs to be clarified and reported consistently.

Methods: Types of intervention
1. For the statement, “….building evidence informed capacity”: This needs to be defined.

Methods: Types of participants
1. ‘Dietician’ is spelled incorrectly (correct spelling = dietitian)

2. It is unclear if the definition of public health is taken directly from the Public Health Agency – if it is, consider italicizing and using quotes for this definition.

3. The wording is awkward for the inclusion and exclusion criteria. It is much easier for the reader to simply state, ‘the inclusion criteria is….’, and ‘the following were excluded……’

Methods: Data abstraction
1. It would be helpful to know more about the tool from Effective Public Health Practice Project - For instance, was it pilot tested? Why was it chosen as useful to this project?

Results: First 2 paragraphs
1. For the statement, “The systematic review by Stone…was not included”: Systematic reviews were not listed as eligible in the inclusion criteria for study types.

Results: Participants and settings
1. For the statement, “All five studies were in English”: The review only searched for research literature in English so no other languages are eligible.
2. Using the word “majority” is misleading, e.g. “The majority of studies….” and “The majority of strategies….”. Given that five studies are being described, it is best to state the actual number, e.g. “Three of the five studies were targeted at…..”

Results: Change in practice
1. For the statement about the Dobbins study, “…improved significantly from baseline to follow-up”: It would be helpful to readers to describe what this improvement was (e.g. decision-making) within the first or second sentence to provide clarity.
2. Time series analysis: This needs to be explained more clearly – The last two sentences describing local and national event are written as though the reader has prior knowledge or more insight into the study than would be expected.

Discretionary Revisions

Abstract
1. Consider listing data sources in abstract

Methods
1. It would be helpful to readers if a tangible example be given for instrumental change and strategic change.
2. Given the content of the studies identified, the EPOC Risk of Bias Tool may have been considered for quality appraisal of all the studies rather than just the one interrupted time series study

Discussion
1. Internet should always be capitalized

Conclusions
1. 1st paragraph: A recommendation to consider is that a realist review may provide insight into the examination of this question, e.g. a realist review is aimed at discerning what works for whom, in what circumstances, in what respects and how (see Pawson 2005 J Health Serv Res Policy).

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being
published

**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