Reviewer's report

Title: Core competencies in the science and practice of knowledge translation: mandate for a Canadian strategic training initiative

Version: 2 Date: 11 July 2011

Reviewer: Heather Buchan

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Major Compulsory Revisions

This paper provides a tantalizing glimpse of a fascinating and important initiative but does not deliver on the promise of the title in terms of delivering a clear description of the program, the strategy underlying it or the core competencies it encompasses. I’m not sure if the approach the authors are aiming to outline relates to the course content and method of delivery or to the broader aims of the national program, as the title seems to suggest both, but I don’t think the paper as it stands successfully delivers on either of these aspects.

1 At present there is no coherent picture presented of the overall program. A number of activities are mentioned, some topics and presenters are listed and various modes of delivery are described but it is not clear how they fit together, how the program is structured and how it operates. What are the core competencies for each stream – (some are mentioned in para 1 stream 1 but I’m not sure whether this is a complete list and none are mentioned for the other streams) and how does the curriculum address these? What is the curriculum? The reference provided about learning styles relates to general practitioners but the target audience for streams 1 & 2 appears to be researchers – do they have similar learning styles and needs? Given that mentorship is a key component of the program it would have been useful to know more about this and how it operates – what qualities are required of a mentor, how are mentors and students matched, what are the expectations of mentors and students?

2 The program is described as a strategic training initiative that aims to meet the capacity demand for KT practitioners and researchers in Canada. However the paper doesn’t describe the strategy that drives the initiative. For example, the target audience seems extremely large and broad in scope. Is there an underlying strategy to marketing and selection of students to ensure the program has the desired impact? What criteria are used to select students? Are opinion leaders selected? Is the aim to achieve a critical mass or strong penetration in a particular area? Is the course freely available to all who apply? (One of the tables (Table 3) suggests that students are funded by some body or organization (STIHR?) but no explanation is provided)

I appreciate that this has been submitted as a short report rather than a comprehensive summary and that the stated aim is to report the outline for the
approach and the progress to date. However the report as it stands does not provide a clear overview of the program or its progress. The detail that is provided in the accompanying tables lacks context (is the aim to have a specific number of participants from each university or province etc?).

There would be a lot of interest in the topic of this paper, it deals with an important issue and the people providing the course are international leaders in the area but I think the paper needs major restructuring and rewriting to achieve its aims.

Despite my difficulty in getting to grips with this paper I do hope that an overview of this program is published - providing an up-front summary of key aspects of the program may overcome many of the problems I had in understanding how the program is structured and operates.

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I was in the past the CEO of the Australian National Institute of Clinical Studies, a government funded body that developed and ran a Fellowship program aimed at providing clinical leaders with knowledge and skills to improve evidence uptake in clinical practice. Some of the authors of the paper have given lectures and workshops for this program.