Building the foundations for impact: Establishing a practice-based research network of physiotherapists and collaborative research question design.

Connor Gleadhill 1,2, Steven Kamper 3,4, Chris Williams 1,3,5

1.Hunter New England Population Health, 2.University of Newcastle, 3.University of Sydney, 4.Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District, 5.Mid North Coast Local Health District.

Background

The disconnect between research and clinical practice hampers behavioural research impact. There is a lack of information to guide researchers and clinicians on how to meaningfully collaborate.

Objective

To describe key learnings from establishing a practice-based research network of physiotherapists in the Hunter region of Australia.

Methods

We used program logic and theory of change to design establishment activities (Figure 1). We did a formative evaluation. We held a problem mapping workshop with local stakeholders and did an online poll to prioritise research areas.

Figure 1: Program logic for network establishment

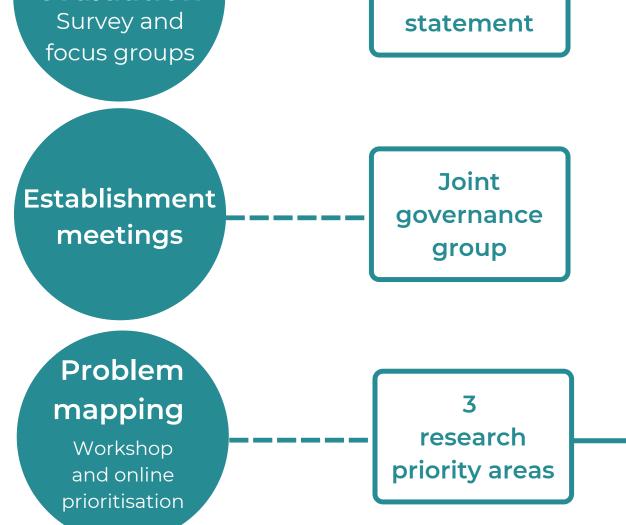


Step 2: Step 3: Step 1: Understand Confirm Clarify and explore Individual Review Gain interviews literature consensus on final Propose questions questions **Guiding questions** If Yes, progress to next activity. after activity: If No, repeat previous activity. Are the gaps clear Can you perform a Is there consensus enough to propose a on the final research literature search to understand more specific research questions? aspects of the clinical question? problem? Do the questions require more specification? Results Key lessons

Figure 2: Collaborative research question development



A vision and mission statement was key to 'harness physiotherapists' motivations



We generated research questions through 3 steps: i) individual interviews to explore clinicians' perspectives of research priorities; ii) review literature and propose initial questions; iii) propose and reach consensus on finalised questions (Figure 2).



'Time crunched' and pragmatic ways of doing things (for example, research prioritisation online) enabled better engagement.



A joint governance group has ensured meaningful collaboration

Our research question development process minimised information loss in tackling our 3 priority research areas:

i) preventing lifestyle risk factors; ii) improving care standards; iii) understanding patient's perceptions of pain

Conclusion

This description of network establishment is a resource for those who want to optimise behavioural trial impact through collaboration. More work is needed to adapt our learnings and models to other contexts.



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