Tailoring innovations to the local context: A social marketing method for knowledge dissemination

A summary of

How to cite this NCCMT summary:

Categories:
Method, Implement, Evaluate, Knowledge dissemination, Stakeholder analysis and engagement

Method

Relevance For Public Health

Although this method was developed for clinical health services, this approach would also be useful for disseminating and implementing innovative public health programs. Because conducting a field test is a crucial component, this model may be particularly relevant for public health programs that need to be adapted to the local context and that require considerable buy-in from frontline staff. For example, setting up and operating a healthy sexuality clinic for youth where specific services are tailored to the needs of local youth with input from staff could potentially benefit from strategies used in this method.

Description

This method uses a case study to describe a knowledge dissemination model based on social marketing and diffusion theory principles. This approach looks to bridge the evidence-practice gap to increase the use of research findings in clinical practice. The steps in the process help to tailor the innovation to facilitate implementation.

The steps used include conducting focus groups with target systems (practitioners and program managers) and communities to assess program relevancy, and field testing the innovation to adapt it before full program dissemination and implementation.

The dissemination model is based on social marketing, which involves applying commercial marketing and advertising methods to promote non-commercial services, ideas or products for the public good. There are four stages in social marketing:

- **Market analysis** involves identifying the needs, characteristics and boundaries of the target audience.
- **Market segmentation** subdivides the target group using relevant characteristics to help tailor the dissemination strategy to their specific needs.
- **Market strategy** involves developing and implementing a dissemination plan where the product characteristics and communication strategies are appropriate for the target audience.
- **Evaluation** involves soliciting structured, formalized feedback about the social marketing process from the target group.

The developers of this method also draw on diffusion of innovations theory (Rogers 1983). In this theory, an innovation is communicated over time through channels by members within an organization. The decision to adopt an innovation moves through various stages, from knowledge (having an awareness of the innovation), to persuasion (forming attitudes about the innovation) and making a decision (to adopt or reject the innovation), to implementation and confirmation (seeking approval for sustaining implementation).

This method identifies five steps for knowledge dissemination:

1. Assess market opportunities and identify the target system.
2. Engage the target system.
3. Field test the intervention.
4. Disseminate and implement the innovation.
5. Gather system feedback and provide ongoing consultation.

Implementing the Tool

Who is Involved?

Different roles with varying authority and responsibilities are involved at various stages of planning and implementing this dissemination method. Potential participants include program developers, program managers and community and advisory groups (e.g., government agencies, health care consumers, funding agencies, non-government organizations).

Steps for Using Tool

The dissemination method consists of five steps.

1) Assess market opportunities and identify the target system.
   - Establish an advisory committee to identify the target system and facilitate access to relevant target agencies. Ideally, the committee will identify target agencies where the innovation is ideally suited (representing a good organizational fit) and will have the greatest impact.
   - Conduct focus groups with practitioners to determine the perceived need for the innovation in the community and to identify relevant target agencies for dissemination and implementation.

2) Engage the target system.
   - Identify and partner with key stakeholders and opinion leaders in the selected target agencies.
   - Use a consultative approach to foster credibility with respect to competence (technical knowledge and expertise) and safety (trustworthiness and lack of a hidden agenda) with management and staff at target agencies.

3) Field test the intervention.
   - Pilot test the intervention in target agencies that meet selection criteria (p. 1708 of the method).
   - Develop a training plan to facilitate pilot testing.
   - Assess intervention effectiveness through evaluation of field test sites.
   - Make changes to the intervention based on evaluation data.

4) Disseminate and implement the innovation.
   - Disseminate the intervention and provide support for implementation.

5) Gather system feedback and provide ongoing consultation.
   - Monitor innovation implementation.
   - Disseminate evaluation findings as a way to share learning and build on successes.
   - Identify opportunities to assist in transforming the intervention into routine practice.

Evaluation and Measurement Characteristics

Evaluation

Has been evaluated.

The developers evaluated the effectiveness of this method using a case study. Twelve months after disseminating the research-based treatments to target agencies, 68% of 34 agencies had implemented the interventions in their entirety to at least one client, and 85% of agencies were implementing some component of the interventions with clients. However, the developers note that the case study treatments met a well-established need in the addiction treatment system in Ontario, which may have contributed to the overall effectiveness of this dissemination method. Also, given the exploratory nature of the study (lack of comparison group), factors other than the dissemination model may have contributed to the model’s effectiveness.

Validity

Not applicable

Reliability

These summaries are written by the NCCMT to condense and to provide an overview of the resources listed in the Registry of Methods and Tools and to give suggestions for their use in a public health context. For more information on individual methods and tools included in the review, please consult the authors/developers of the original resources.
Not applicable

Methodological Rating

Unknown/No evidence

Tool Development

Developers

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Method of Development

This method was developed using a case study of the dissemination model used in the OPTIONS (OutPatient Treatment In Ontario Services) Project. The OPTIONS Project was developed by the Addiction Research Foundation (ARF) at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. The project disseminated two research-based outpatient treatment interventions, Guided Self-Change (GSC) and Structured Relapse Prevention (SRP). These interventions were developed at the ARF for addiction counsellors at Assessment and Referral Centres in Ontario. The case study outlines the dissemination strategy developed for the GSC and SRP interventions, to be implemented by outpatient addictions counsellors.

Release Date

1998

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Resources

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