Knowledge Brokering in Canada

The Canadian Dementia Knowledge Translation Network (CDKTN) is pleased to present the second draft of the Canadian Knowledge Brokering Core Competency Framework. The development of the framework represents an important step in the evolution of knowledge brokering in the Canadian health care system. In the health sector, knowledge brokering has enjoyed less than a decade of popularity as a strategy to facilitate the flow of knowledge and experience to improve practice and policy. Despite the relative “newness”, the increasing awareness and application of knowledge brokering concepts has led to a call for an emerging consensus on core competencies associated with the role.

This draft core competency framework presents the competencies expected of the entry-level knowledge broker, identified and developed through evidence (research and experiential), and contributed to by knowledge translation practitioners and academics; validation of these competencies will commence in the spring of 2010.

The competencies and validation data will refine the description of knowledge brokering and potential impact, and will allow organizations to replicate the successes of others currently applying this knowledge translation strategy.

CDKTN welcomes feedback to help inform future reviews of the Canadian Knowledge Brokering Core Competency Framework. Please forward feedback to:

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Please reference as follows:


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Definitions

knowledge
For the purposes of this document, unless otherwise stated, the term “knowledge” refers to research-based knowledge, practice-based knowledge, and the knowledge based on the lived experience of the person giving or receiving care.

knowledge translation
Knowledge translation (or KT) is the exchange, synthesis and ethically-sound application of knowledge – within a complex system of interactions among researchers and users – to accelerate the capture of the benefits of research for Canadians through improved health, more effective services and products, and a strengthened health care system (1). For the purposes of this document, we will refer to knowledge translation with the understanding that the term includes knowledge exchange and is sometimes referred synonymously as knowledge transfer.

knowledge producers
Knowledge producers are people who literally produce research-based, practice-based or experience-based knowledge that can be shared with others. Anyone can produce knowledge including researchers, decision makers, policy makers, care providers, persons with lived experience, etc.

knowledge users
Knowledge users are people who literally apply research-based, practice-based or experience-based knowledge to improve their practice. Anyone can apply knowledge to improve practice including researchers, decision makers, policy makers, care providers, persons with lived experience, etc.

Introduction

A shift from moving evidence [into practice] to solving problems is due (2). Our health care system places high demands on health care workers, over-burdening people with the task of keeping current while concurrently maintaining the highest standards for providing quality care. One mechanism to ease the individual burden of keeping current, and distribute the “load”, is knowledge brokering.

The role of the Knowledge Broker (formal or implied) is one of the few in the system where the primary function is to link people across the continuum of care. The key feature of knowledge brokering is opening up the lines of communication and connecting people, allowing them the opportunity to build good working relationships and feel comfortable exchanging ideas, knowledge and information.

The approach to knowledge brokering in the mental health and dementia sector transcends all health issues. The knowledge, skills and attitudes associated with knowledge professionals formally referred to as Knowledge Brokers, and other professionals engaging in knowledge brokering as a function of their role, are what we refer to as core competencies. In identifying knowledge brokering core competencies, it becomes possible to bring together people from across the various health care sectors and allow them to work together cohesively within a common framework leading to increased collaboration and a strengthened and effective knowledge translation facilitation.

The core competencies presented here are universal to all knowledge brokers or professionals who broker knowledge as a function of their role within the Canadian health care system. This document is intended to not only guide and inform knowledge brokering practice but also serve as a communication tool to provide better insight and bring clarity to a role and KT facilitation strategy on which relatively little has been published. It is hoped that these core competencies will help those who engage in knowledge brokering as a function of their role to identify the processes they already engage in and to approach them in a more deliberate and evidence-informed way. This document will continue to grow and evolve as the lived experience, and results from ongoing research, contribute to our understanding of this very important role.
knowledge brokering in practice.

Within the context of our current health care system infrastructure, knowledge brokering activities cross five domains. A Knowledge Broker, or a professional who brokers knowledge as a function of their role, may work within one domain or across several domains.

The domains are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>research project-based</td>
<td>knowledge brokering that maximizes the impact of individual or collaborative research and education projects on policy and practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>network-based</td>
<td>knowledge brokering that facilitates knowledge sharing, use and reuse across local, regional, provincial / territorial, national, international networks (virtual or face-to-face).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>field / program-based</td>
<td>knowledge brokering within the context of a specific program or organization to enhance the integration of quality knowledge (research-based or experiential) to support evidence-informed decision making across disciplines, sectors, and between knowledge users and producers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>topic / issue-based</td>
<td>knowledge brokering that facilitates a coordinated response amongst researchers, policy makers, and care providers to identify health care issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization-based</td>
<td>knowledge brokering that facilitates the advancement of practice across a specific organization, or segment of an organization.</td>
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</tbody>
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Assumptions

1. Core competencies are defined as the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required of a knowledge broker or professional who brokers knowledge as a function of their role to work effectively, ethically, and with empathy.

2. Knowledge brokering core competencies are relevant across all knowledge brokering domains, and apply across all contexts of practice to meet the information needs of the population served.

3. Successful knowledge translation outcomes are not the sole responsibility of, or solely attributed to, the person knowledge brokering. As facilitators of group processes, cultures and contexts will influence how and what a person knowledge brokering can enable.

4. All knowledge brokering practice is included in the following five domains: research project-based; network-based; field/program-based; topic/issue-based; organization-based.

5. Regardless of domain of practice, or combination of domains, all persons knowledge brokering require the skills, or the ability to develop the skills, outlined in this document given that one kind of knowledge brokering often flows into another.

6. Knowledge brokering involves working in collaboration with a variety of researchers, policy makers, decision makers, care providers, and those with lived experience across the care continuum and other sectors to ensure the best possible delivery of health care in Canada.

7. Within the scope of practice, each person knowledge brokering is accountable for practising within his/her own level of professional competence and for determining the skill set and knowledge required by unique contexts and client needs.

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Working definitions as related to assumptions

**Knowledge**: Competent demonstration of facts and information as acquired through learning, experience, and reflection.

**Skill**: Competent demonstration of abilities, which have been acquired through knowledge translation, training, and experience.

**Attitude**: A complex mental state involving beliefs, feelings, and values required to communicate and act in certain ways.

**Ethically-sound application of knowledge**: Ethically sound knowledge translation activities for improved health (including knowledge brokering) are those that are consistent with ethical principles and norms, social values as well as legal and other regulatory frameworks while keeping in mind that principles, values and laws can compete among and between each other at any given point in time (4).

**Empathy**: Empathy is considered a basic component of all helpful relationships (5, 6) and can be seen as a form of professional interaction (a set of skills or competencies), rather than a subjective emotional experience, or a personality trait that you either have or don’t have. Empathy is a complex, multi-dimensional concept that involves ability to a) understand the situation, perspective and feelings; b) to communicate that understanding and check its accuracy; and c) to act on that understanding in a helpful way (7).

**Continuum of Care**: An integrated and seamless system of settings, services, service providers, and service levels to meet the needs of clients or defined populations (8); the continuum of care can include primary care, acute care, long-term care, rehabilitation, community and home care.

**Professional Competence**: The habitual and judicious use of communication, knowledge, technical skills, reasoning, emotions, values, and reflection in daily practice for the benefit of the individual and community being served (9).
Core Competencies

Four core competencies have been identified as being central to the knowledge broker role and/or knowledge brokering as a function of your practice. In order to excel in this role, the knowledge broker must be able to:

1. Develop mutual understanding of goals and cultures

2. Collaborate with knowledge users and producers to identify issues and problems for which solutions are required

3. Facilitate the identification, access, assessment, interpretation, and translation of evidence into policy and practice

4. Facilitate the management of information and knowledge
1. Develop mutual understanding of goals and cultures

The knowledge broker demonstrates competence in the development of a mutual understanding of goals and cultures by performance of the following behaviours.

The knowledge broker:

**Develops and maintains professional relationships between self and stakeholder organizations, policy/decision makers, researchers, care providers and networks, etc. by:**

- Initiating introductions between self and key stakeholder
- Inquiring and sharing information about roles and responsibilities
- Actively listening to the successes and challenges of current approaches
- Maintaining open lines of communication (i.e. be accessible for questions, and engage in two-way, or multi-way communication)

**Links decision makers, researchers, and care providers with each other so that they are able to better understand each other’s goals, professional cultures by:**

- Identifying opportunities for mutual benefit that may be of interest to the corresponding audiences
- Facilitating knowledge exchange between the audiences, in a format that best suits the context and individual needs (i.e. skilled in the knowledge exchange techniques required for online, teleconference, in-person, large group, small group, etc.)
- Engaging in any of the following approaches, as determined by the individual needs: appreciative inquiry, conflict resolution, deliberative dialogue, systems thinking, adult learning principles, etc.

**Fosters partnerships between professionals, organizations and sectors by:**

- Initiating introductions between key stakeholders
- Identifying, or facilitating the identification of, specific opportunities for collaborative leverage or advocacy
- Supporting and nurturing the relationship with continued linking as appropriate, based on knowledge gleaned from an ongoing environmental scan
2. Collaborate with knowledge users and producers to identify issues and problems for which solutions are required

The knowledge broker demonstrates competence in collaborating with knowledge users to identify issues and problems for which solutions are required by performance in the following behaviours.

The knowledge broker:

Engages in an initial and ongoing scan, or leverages information collected by others, of the priorities, issues, trends and concerns associated with the sector:

- Familiarizing self with priorities if they have already been well articulated
- Consulting key stakeholders, identifying funder priorities and funding trends, reviewing media releases, connecting with other knowledge brokers working in the system, etc.
- Consulting with knowledge users and producers on ‘hot topics’/priority issues that affect care
- Reviewing priority documents, literature reviews, position papers, etc. as needed
- Assessing and analysing data from these multiple evidence sources (or facilitating the process to do this with others)

Summarizes scan results and communicates to highlight key issues by:

- Writing and disseminating summaries
- Facilitating the assembly of stakeholders for dialogue (large or small groups)
- Targeting individual stakeholders with segments that would be of interest
- Developing, or facilitating the development of, priority documents, literature reviews, position papers, etc. as needed

Facilitates knowledge exchange opportunities between knowledge producers and potential knowledge users to inform knowledge yet to be produced by:

- Identifying the key stakeholder representatives to engage in dialogue with each other (may include conducting a stakeholder analysis)
- Facilitating the identification of real knowledge needs and anticipating barriers to the application of new knowledge (problem framing and problem shaping)
- Nurturing the continued relationship between knowledge producers and users

Where appropriate, identifies or responds to the identification of opportunities to assemble groups (i.e. working groups, communities of practice (CoPs) or communities of interest (CoIs), steering committees, etc.) to engage in an ongoing assessment of topic-specific issues and possible subsequent solutions by:

- Understanding life cycles and fluidity of various groups and group processes and facilitating transitions as priorities and people shift
- Assembling and enabling key stakeholders to drive group activities
- Educating group members of KTE concepts, as needed
- Facilitating gap analysis, strategic planning and stakeholder analysis
- Facilitating the identification of a group vision/goals/objectives, etc.
- Facilitating the development of work plans or project plans to focus group activities, as appropriate
- Convening project work teams to accomplish work plan objectives, as needed
- Identifying technology needs and facilitation of its use
- Supporting and responding to the needs of group members
3. Facilitate the identification, assessment, interpretation, and translation of evidence into policy and practice

The knowledge broker demonstrates competence in facilitating the identification, assessment, interpretation, and translation of evidence into policy and practice by performance in the following behaviours.

The knowledge broker:

**Uses relevant knowledge about knowledge translation, knowledge transfer and knowledge exchange frameworks, theories, models, mechanisms and strategies, to help groups identify KT facilitation strategies that will best meet the unique information needs and context by:**

- Researching and reading peer-reviewed articles journal articles, white papers, research newsletters, etc. (quality evidence)
- Connecting and communicating with other KT professionals
- Applying relevant approaches to personal practice

**Shares information with stakeholders about KT practices in order to build capacity for evidence-informed decision-making by:**

- Tailoring information, where appropriate, for specific audiences or contexts
- Mentoring, coaching stakeholders directly where appropriate
- Modelling evidence-informed practice
- Linking stakeholders with relevant literature

**Identifies, or facilitates the identification of quality evidence by:**

- Facilitating knowledge exchange between key stakeholders
- Conducting environmental scans
- Engaging in reflective practice and drawing themes from lived experience

**Consults with, or facilitates the consultation between, key stakeholders (including the intended knowledge users) to facilitate the contextualization, interpretation and translation of quality evidence to ensure relevancy for target audience by:**

- Facilitating dialogue to understand the knowledge needs and characteristics of the intended knowledge users to inform translation (both in content and design)
- Considering and applying knowledge of specific contexts that may affect application of new knowledge, such as organizational readiness, political climate, skill-base, resource availability, supportive infrastructures, etc.
- Leveraging peer-to-peer information sharing where possible
4. Facilitate the management of information and synthesis of knowledge

The knowledge broker demonstrates competence in facilitating the management of information and synthesis of knowledge by performance in the following behaviours.

The knowledge broker:

Coordinates regular communications to link groups with information relevant to their current topic(s) of interest and maintain a rhythm of activity, foster ongoing knowledge exchange, and manage knowledge in an ongoing manner, including formats such as blogs, discussion forum prompts, e-mail communications, newsletters

Supports the accessibility of quality evidence through the design and development of:

- Knowledge synthesis products (e.g., evidence-based/policy briefs, literature review summaries, models, frameworks, blueprints, decision-aids, narratives, etc.)
- Learning events or series (e.g., webinars, Fireside Chats, e-learning events, in-services, think tanks, conferences, video, etc.)
- Resource collections (e.g., online databases, clearinghouses, resources centres, knowledge banks, libraries, etc.)

Develops and maintains understandings of web-based collaborative technology (e.g., blogs, discussion forums, online story-telling, etc.), and identifies and leverages the appropriate technology, based on the ability and needs of the group, to ensure the accessibility of quality evidence

Values intellectual property through the acknowledgement authors, originators, and contributors to any and all resources made available in the public domain (written, oral, etc.)

Values the organization and management of knowledge as a key KT and sustainability strategy

Develops and maintains expertise of knowledge translation through deliberate visual design of quality evidence-based products to enhance the effectiveness of communication and understanding (i.e. ‘knowledge translation through design’\(^1\)) by:

- Developing and applying page layout skills\(^2\)
- Considering colour, typography, boarders, shapes, etc.
- Developing or using appropriate graphics or visual models to represent concepts

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\(^1\) Knowledge translation through design involves applying the concepts of design to knowledge translation products or tools to enhance the understanding, or uptake of the evidence being presented. The design and layout itself is an important and effective knowledge translation mechanism.

\(^2\) Page layout skills include the process by which the elements (text and images) are laid on the page orderly, aesthetically and precisely.
References


