

**Accomplishing what cannot be accomplished alone: When Health and Safety  
System Partners become part of Research**

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## **Problem**

Many theorists in knowledge transfer strongly advocate involving potential users of research within the research process. They say it ensures the relevance and usefulness of the research project, helps researchers gain access to community members and workplaces, and achieves practitioner buy-in and involvement. This can lead to increased awareness, knowledge and relevance of the research findings. Yet this process has not been widely applied within workplace health research. This poster describes how an academic-community partnership on workplace health and safety research was developed. The research program involved occupational health and safety system stakeholders, including health and safety agencies, who acted as advisors, as well as the implementers of the intervention within the research process. It examines the facilitators and barriers to establishing and maintaining the relationship, and describes how the relationship at different times facilitated and changed the direction of the research.

## **Objective**

To include potential users of the research as advisors as well as partners within the research process. The goal was to ensure the relevance and usefulness of the research project, and help researchers gain access to community members, workplaces, and hard-to-reach decision makers. We wished to achieve practitioner buy-in and involvement. We wanted to increase awareness and knowledge of the research findings, and increase the probability of the use of the evidence-based research in their decision making.

## **Method**

Over the last 13 months, there have 1) been regular meetings with the organizational representatives that make up the Advisory Committee where representatives from 4 organizations and the scientist group have been present. Also, 21 meetings organized with researchers and different members of these organizations. 2) 12 meetings with researchers and health and safety agencies consultants/ergonomists who will be interveners in the workplaces. 3) 19 meetings with or presentations to organizations within the larger environment. 4) Bulletins sent out to a mailing list of manufacturing and service sector organizations. 5) Newsletter articles written. The evaluation framework used 2 major criteria. The establishing of a strong partner-researcher relationship was noted with evidence of establishing goodwill, reciprocity, and long term alliances. The transformation of the research design and process through collaboration was noted when there was evidence of conceptual, structural and strategic changes to the research.

## **Results**

A strong partner-researcher relationship has been established. There is now regular contact through meetings, emails, and telephone calls. There is an extensive flow of information from the health and safety agencies to the researchers, and requests for information and help from the researchers for such things as analyzing their data. The research design and process transformed in the way it was conceived and framed. For

example, instead of a random design, workplaces will now be recruited through the personal contacts of the health and safety agencies consultants; there will now be incentives for the companies; the service sector as well as manufacturing is included; the amount of data to be collected has been reduced; and the outcomes have broadened to include first aids as well as musculoskeletal outcomes.

### **Conclusions**

The rate at which ideas have changed or been dropped, revisited or adopted, has sometimes been problematic for both researchers and partners who can feel frustrated with the uncertainties. Health and Safety system partners have often wanted the researchers to be more practical and for the research to reflect more of their workplace experience. Such feedback on what was feasible and what should be done have led to both clarification and strengthening of the research program.