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Getting the message across: Principles for developing brief-Knowledge Transfer (b-KT) communiqués

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Principles for developing brief-Knowledge Transfer (b-KT) communiqués.

Feature article

Title:

Getting the message across: Principles for developing brief-Knowledge Transfer (b-KT) communiqués.

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Abstract:

Objective: This feature article on knowledge transfer presents principles and strategies to support the development of short communiqués to end-users.

Participants: Formal and informal knowledge brokers are the targeted users of the strategies.

Methods: Research studies and conceptual literature in knowledge transfer informed the development of brief-Knowledge Transfer (b-KT) principles. Principles are explained and a sample of how they informed the development of *KIT-Tip* Sheets is offered to promote ways to use principles in knowledge dissemination.

Results: b-KT principles can be used as a framework to guide the development of short communiqués by knowledge brokers in work practice but also in the health, social and rehabilitation domains. In addition, these principles promote the participation of end-users in the development of knowledge transfer.

Conclusions: Formal evaluation is needed on the mechanisms that underscore the use of these principles in achieving the uptake and use of knowledge by end-users.

Key words: knowledge brokering, strategies, knowledge dissemination

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1. Introduction

The need for partnering in knowledge generation and sharing with persons with disabilities is essential. The challenge for health, rehabilitation, educational or social professionals as well as consumer support groups that act as formal or informal knowledge brokers [1,2] is helping persons with chronic disabilities, work injuries, and chronic pain move from being passive recipients of knowledge, to using knowledge, exploring it, and acting on knowledge to make lifestyle adaptations and workstyle redesign. Strategies that can help persons explore and consider new information from research or procedural documents or rights based policies is needed to overcome injustice issues due to inaccessible information and the daunting task of making sense of unfamiliar knowledge across sectors. For instance, persons with work injuries are placed into a system of unfamiliar expectations about what they need to do such as attending to the prescribed claims management systems and realizing new expectations for worker behaviour and responsibilities within their health, social and local workplace contexts [1,3,4]. Workers need to make complex decisions in the midst of new learning about self, disability and system/insurance processes. Such processes require procedural decisions and reasoning and meeting timely compliance mandates. Further to this, workers need to know the rules to abide across the health, social, insurance and workplace sectors to make informed decisions [5]. Beyond this workers with injuries have suggested what they need more of is information that helps them explore conditional issues about the nature of their health problems to support short-term and long-term reasoning across and throughout the RTW process [6]. For instance, they need to receive information on the long-term or short-term consequences of disability, as well as the behaviour and the structural or system expectations of themselves and others in the process of recovery needed to live and work with newly exposed disabilities.

While consumer groups, health, rehabilitation and social professionals are helping to make a difference, research suggests that there is a need to find ways to more effectively broker knowledge so that workers with injuries can access and use the knowledge they need [1,7]. In a recent study on knowledge brokering to support workers with injuries two of the recommendations were 1) that a best practice guide is needed to support knowledge transfer by health care professionals and support groups, and 2) that efforts are needed to support training and development of knowledge transfer techniques[1]. A template for formal and informal knowledge brokers was developed and subsequently published [7] that can also assist in supporting Interactive Knowledge Transfer (IKT) and training [1]. Thus, in my own research I have continued to work on the development of strategies to support knowledge transfer techniques with national support groups (CIWA) (CPC), master's occupational therapy students and health and rehabilitation professionals. To date we have focused on the design of principles that can serve as a framework for developing short or brief (less than four pages) communiqués to help transfer research or procedural information on topics of relevance to workers with injuries and their families as well as to formal (health and rehabilitation professionals) and informal (consumer support groups) knowledge brokers. The Principles for brief-Knowledge Transfer (b-KT) communiqués were adapted from research results on strategies to facilitate IKT [1], the conceptual principles in knowledge transfer outlined

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by Shaw and colleagues [5], and Clark's Advocacy Solutions® [8]. The following will provide the principles for developing short or brief communiqués and use an example of how they were used to develop the communiqué entitled Work Transition Tips: Helping workers get the right information at the right time, Canadian Injured Workers Alliance, CIWA *KIT-Tip Sheet mini4-2010*, [9]. These b-KT principles supported the development of the design, layout, content, and stakeholder involvement in the process. The *KIT-Tip Sheet mini4-2010* is included in this issue of the journal and represents the second Knowledge Transfer: Pay it Forward communiqué in the journal WORK.

2. Principles for brief-Knowledge Transfer (b-KT)

Principles for developing brief knowledge transfer communiqués include:

1. Engage the involvement of end-user(s), [1,5]
2. Tailor messages to the match the needs or capacity of the end user, [1,5]
3. Consider equitable access, fairness and transparency, [5]
4. Support end-user understanding of the content through simplification and participation, [5]
5. Interactive components to support the interpretation and use the information in daily life, social contexts or current situations [1,5].

These b-KT principles can be used to support the development of short or brief communiqués for end-users. Many of these principles overlap and are inextricably linked to one another to provide a meaningful and a structured approach to b-KT. They are presented here individually to inform the development of brief communiqués. While these principles evolved from research with adults with chronic pain, health care providers and consumer groups I posit that they are also useful with other end-users. For instance, I have given a number of workshops on these principles and others have used them in text documents such as brochures or newsletters, in presentations or integrated into education programs or used on websites etc to support KT with students, with parents, professionals and persons with disabilities. The next step will be to formally evaluate the effectiveness of communiqués that draw on these principles in knowledge use and uptake with end-users. Further to these principles it is expected that additional principles will emerge through ongoing research to add to this knowledge base on b-KT. Each of the principles will be introduced and strategies to operationalize these are provided.

2.1 Engage the involvement of end-users.

In developing a b-KT communiqué purposeful consideration must be given to ways that include and involve the reader or user. Strategies must capture the attention of end-users to make it easy for them to take in the information through different senses or to read information. For instance, the use of a number of strategies that may appeal to different users may be needed that can attract and then sustain a person's attention in reflecting further on the value in taking the time to learn or listen or to glean something from the message being conveyed. There are a number of strategies that can be used to capture attention that elicit engagement of the user. One is using colour that is appealing or draws attention to the communiqué especially if a text document. Other ways include the use of senses such as sound or images. Use of photos on text based communiqués and

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documents can engage the user to reflect on something that may resonate with them. As well, quotes or metaphors prompt the intrigue of the user. All of these strategies were used in the development of the CIWA *KIT-Tip Sheet mini4-2010* [9]. Note the colour is black and red on the pdf versions that can be downloaded from (www.ciwa.ca). A photo is used to convey the main plot or what the communiqué is about, in the case of the *KIT-Tip Sheet mini4-2010* [9] it depicts the unease or struggle in sorting out information. A quote from a worker is used to inspire persons who may face a similar dilemma or problem to read or find out more.

The second aspect of engagement and involving the end user is through careful crafting of the opening message in the title and the first three or four statements/paragraphs of the communiqué. The opening message seeks to provide succinct communication about the key or salient content of knowledge or information being shared and it aims to create a compelling connection between the individual reading or hearing or seeing the message with the content. Further, the opening message prompts engagement through suggesting that the information being conveyed is meaningful, relevant or is potentially very important to the end-user or to someone they know. This type of message subsequently serves as a cue for the user to want to find out more. I have adapted three questions from training in Advocacy Solutions® developed by Ryan Clark [8] to guide the construction of three to four brief statements or paragraphs or bullet points in the opening message on b-KT communiqués. These include answering What is the key problem? What is the impact of the problem on whom or for whom? What would be the result if the problem is resolved and suggest potential solutions and what they involve or entail (i.e., strategies, actions or changes). In the *KIT-Tip Sheet mini4-2010* [9] the title gives information to cue who this might be relevant to. Next the paragraphs on the front page offer how the information may be relevant to end-users.

2.2 Tailor messages to the match the needs or capacity of the end user.

Tailoring a message in brief communiqués involves creating easily understood information that uses short sentences, bullets, bolded or italicized information and plain language. Next, it involves breaking down actions of key end-users for whom the information is intended. Offering opportunities to use the knowledge through creating a sense of doable steps or things that people can do as a result of the information is key to the tailoring process. Thus, it is important to stay focused on whom the end-users are and to tailor how people might use this information. In developing the *KIT-Tip Sheets* we have used a variety of lead ins to generate our statements such as What can a worker do... what can a health or rehabilitation provider do... what can a family member do, what can a support group member do... what can a co-worker do... what can an employer do.....

2.3. Consider equitable access, fairness and transparency.

Ensuring equitable access and fairness renders the need for considering a realm of ways that persons can access the information - written, video, audio or in a group as well as considering literacy and comprehension or the need for different languages and cultural ways of knowing. So often the information in written form such as research findings is out of the literacy reach for many people and even in many brochures information is written at high literacy levels. These situations lead to injustices and inequities for people

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who may benefit from or need information as demanded by organizations such as in the case of injured workers. Also some procedural information is not available unless a person knows to ask the right question. In developing communiqués it is important to consider what should be conveyed in a communiqué and not only what it is we know. Thus the opportunity to use a short communiqué to be transparent in the information or message that is conveyed will help a user feel that the information is also credible and considerate of how a user might use the knowledge in a personally relevant or meaningful way. Part of creating equitable access is to consider the literacy level. In developing *KIT-Tip Sheets* we use a web-based program to assist in reducing the reading literacy levels to grade 6 to 10 depending on the users. We have used The Flesch Reading Ease formulas to do this [10]. In my work with national consumer groups, part of the process of considering fairness is to make sure that worker and family members are included as end-users and that we attempt to focus on transferability of knowledge to them. Transparency is achieved through working with consumer groups who know what information is needed by end-users. Thus, development of the *KIT-Tip Sheet* is read and information content is vetted through consumer groups to ensure that information that may be needed is added in that are transparent and relevant. This step assists in making sure that information is contextually relevant in ways that users might use or raises information they might not have considered or otherwise know about.

2.4. Support end-user understanding of the content through simplification and participation.

Brief communiqués should provide information that is simple. For instance, it may draw on everyday life examples, or perhaps a short story or case or statement from someone who used the information in their life or the case can be linked to video if a text document is on a website. The knowledge being transferred may be complex and often the use of narrative approaches or videos can simplify the knowledge. The other way to promote participation in the development of short KT documents extends from principle three and that is to engage consumer groups such as end users in participating in developing the stories or cases for inclusion in the brief communiqués.

2.5. Interactive components to support the interpretation and use the information in daily life, social contexts or current situations.

Research suggests that persons with chronic pain and disabilities require time to reflect and consider information and to sort out how it may be relevant to them [5]. This process is needed to assist persons in using relevant research, procedural and experiential knowledge in making decisions, in considering planning for contingencies, and to take steps or actions toward change, adaptation or lifestyle and work redesign. Thus, short communiqués that include interactive components support action by the end-user. Some of the strategies that can support interaction with knowledge and information being conveyed include the use of purposeful reflection questions or encouragement to dialogue with others, to set targeted goals, and / or to reflect with others on outcomes or interaction techniques. In the *KIT-Tip Sheet mini4-2010* [9] we have included reflection type questions in the other *KIT-Tip Sheets*. For instance, we encourage use of participation in groups and group interaction to support knowledge use and uptake into everyday life. In addition, the last section of the *KIT-Tip Sheet mini4-2010* [9] is consistent with this

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principle in that we have information available to help connect the end-user to the actual studies or information online to support further knowledge exploration, examination and integration.

3. Conclusion

I encourage you to use these principles to move forward with strategies that can help make a difference in the lives of persons with disabilities and those that have work injuries. Further evaluation of the use of b-KT principles in contributing to more effective uptake is indicated. I would be interested in working with contributing authors to this column to use these principles in designing future KT: Pay it forward communiqués. Please be in touch we me at leshaw@uwo.ca

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