

Strategies for rehabilitation clinicians to move evidence-based knowledge into practice: a systematic review

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Introduction: Rehabilitation clinicians need to stay current regarding best practices, especially since adherence to clinical guidelines can significantly improve patient outcomes. To move evidence-based knowledge into practice, knowledge translation (KT) interventions that are most effective in promoting the use of best practices among clinicians need to be identified.

Objectives: To conduct a structured literature review examining the effectiveness of single or multi-component KT interventions for improving knowledge, attitudes, and practice behaviors of occupational therapists and physical therapists.

Methods: A systematic review of seven electronic databases was conducted to identify studies that met the following inclusion criteria: randomized controlled trials or non-experimental studies; published in English or French; and examined the effectiveness of KT interventions for improving knowledge, attitudes, and/or practice behaviors of occupational therapists or physical therapists.

Results: 13 studies met the inclusion criteria and of these, 5 studies involved occupational therapists. Participation in an active multi-component KT intervention (i.e. interactive educational sessions, opinion leaders, outreach visits, reminders, and printed materials) resulted in improved evidence-based knowledge and practice behaviors as perceived by physical therapists, in comparison to passive dissemination strategies. These gains did not translate into change in clinicians' attitudes towards best practices. There is conflicting and limited evidence as to whether active single KT interventions are effective in improving clinicians' knowledge and practice behaviors.

Conclusion: This review suggests that active multi-component KT interventions can lead to improvements in physical therapists' knowledge and practice behaviors. While these findings can be extrapolated to occupational therapists, this review identified serious gaps in the KT literature on effective strategies to enhance best practice behavior in this professional group.

Contribution to practice: For the first time in the history of rehabilitation we have substantial evidence regarding the effectiveness/ineffectiveness of treatments. This knowledge needs to be utilized by clinicians to enhance patient outcomes. The growing realization that KT does not occur without intense efforts has led to a new field of research aimed at identifying the most effective KT strategies. This review suggests immediate actions that can be taken to enhance clinical uptake of best practices and also suggests gaps in our knowledge that warrant assertive research.