



RESEARCH BRIEF

The Process of Spreading Best Practice Guidelines in Home Care Organizations

KEY POINTS

- ✓ Spread of practice guidelines is a sequential, gradual process starting locally and slowly diverging.
- ✓ The process can be facilitated by commitment of leaders, sustainability strategies and realization of positive outcomes.

What is the topic of this research?

Little is known about how best practices are spread within home care organizations. Spread can result in healthcare improvements through efficient use of scarce resources. Spread can be defined as “the process through which new working methods developed in one setting are adopted, perhaps with appropriate modifications, in other organizational contexts”.¹

Research question

What is the process by which best practice guidelines relevant to older adults are spread within home care agencies?

How was the study done?

The study design was a qualitative grounded theory. Study sampling included four home care organizations in Ontario and participants were frontline staff, managers, resource staff and senior managers. Two in-depth interviews were conducted with each study participant one year apart in order to develop an understanding of how practice guidelines are spread. Practice guidelines on falls, pain, and wound care were chosen to explore the process of spread.

What did the researchers find?

The results of the grounded theory analysis determined that there were five sequential phases of spread: (a) committing to change, (b) implementing on a small scale, (c) adapting locally, (d) spreading internally to multiple sites and users, and (e) disseminating externally.

The three main factors that helped the process of spread were: (a) leading with passion and commitment, (b) sustainability strategies, and (c) seeing the benefits.

Challenges to the process of practice guideline spread included: high staff and manager turnover, time and resource constraints and managed competition for home care contracts.

Key message

The process of practice guideline spread is a sequential process that requires commitment, small scale implementation and internal spread prior to larger scale spread across broader geographic areas. Maintenance requires sustainability strategies and the realization of benefits from the spread.

Where do we go from here?

In the future it will be important to make investments in resources to support spread of best practices (e.g. leaders/ champions, communication, education).

Efficient audit and feedback mechanisms will be necessary in order to “see the benefits” of spread early and often (stakeholder engagement and communication).

Providing technical support will enable improved audit, feedback and program evaluation (e.g. IT, electronic health records, evaluation expertise).

Future research could improve understanding of the process of spread to external agencies.



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References

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