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Knowledge brokers and rapid reviews: what do they do and how do they do it?

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What's knowledge brokering?

"All the activity that links decision makers with researchers, facilitating their interaction so that they are able to better understand each other's goals and professional cultures, influence each other's work, forge new partnerships, and promote the use of research-based evidence in decision-making."

Lomas J, 2007. 'The in-between world of knowledge brokering. *BMJ* 2007;334;129-132.

KBs and rapid reviews

- Relatively new tool
- Short timeframes
- Surprisingly complex
  - Getting the review questions 'just right'
  - Scoping the review to timeframe and budget

- *Getting the best possible review, given constraints*

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Evidence Check

Implementing system-wide risk stratification approaches

An **Evidence Check** rapid review brokered by the Sax Institute for the NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation. July 2015.

Knowledge brokering

- Evidence Check rapid reviews
- Knowledge brokers
    - Review the commissioning tool
    - Use and review questions
    - **One hour knowledge brokering**
    - Draft a review proposal
    - Finalise and sign off.
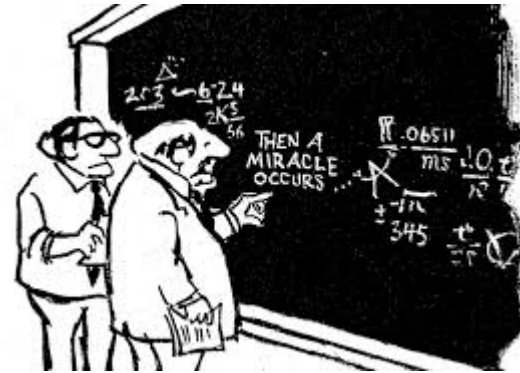
Study questions

- Descriptive observational study
- Study questions:
  - How do they elicit information?
  - How does trust play out?
  - How do negotiations occur?

Method

- 15 KB transcripts
- 1-2 hours
- Field notes
- A brief structured questionnaire
  - Policy participants
  - Knowledge brokers

- NVIVO 10

- Coding
  - Draft coding schedule
  - First 5 transcripts
  - Revised schedule
- Reapplied to 5 + 5
- Final 5
  - Range & variation
  - Test initial analysis

The knowledge brokering session

1. Exploratory phase
   – Context
   – Purpose
   – Audience

   How will the findings be used, by whom and in what context?

2. Diagnostic phase
   – Intent
   – Scope
   – Architecture

   What is the review's critical perspective?

3. Checklist
   – Quality assessment
   – Level of language
   – Tabulation

   How should the information be presented?

4. Project management
   – Publication
   – Contracts
   – Timelines

   Where to from here?

Exploratory: purpose and use

- Building trust
  - Open dialogue
  - Shared expertise
    - Policy problem and context
    - Content and direction
    - Research process
    - Feasibility

Open dialogue

- *'It is always the first conversation that we have that just allows me to inhabit this landscape that you are in, and now in going through the questions, I am very free about what it is you want.'*

- *'I find this is a universal response from those who have written the questions, is to feel really exposed. But let me just assure you that at the end of this my brain hurts as much as yours!'*

Describing the problem in context

- Narrative
  - People
  - Agencies
  - Policy cycles
  - Political realities

- Broker
  - Filtering information
  - Understanding main concerns
  - Consensus about the focus
  - Drawing out what's implicit

Filtering and disclosure

- *'One of the things I was intrigued about, it says 'there was a draft policy developed but not progressed'. So I was wondering whether you could sort of fill me in on that? What's going on there and why hasn't it progressed? It could be just some common sense reason like lack of time, but there could be other things [there] as well.'*

- *'That is why we want to talk about what we can actually do in [this problem]; it is an agenda on several other people's expectations and there are a number of different places looking at how we the system respond to this... It is on a number of people's agendas.'*

Critical perspective

- The 'keystone effect'
- Critical perspective must be clear and agreed

- Not always obvious
- Takes some disentangling
- Careful rewording

Through the looking glass

The critical perspective

- *'To what extent do you want effort and time to be spent on those high level broader questions, you know 'What should we be asking? What are the different ways of doing this?' versus the reality that we are going to be doing surveys, you know. Because the way I phrase the questions ... will give guidance to the researcher about the balance of effort, if you like, that they should put into it.'*

- *'What we need to do is just turn [the question] around so that the reviewer is being asked to do a review of a style of program, rather than the beginning point being your actual program and then finding evidence to fit it. Does that make sense?*

  There is a risk of bias there [and] you want this to be seen as "No, this is independent, it's hands off, we commissioned this review and, independently, this is where the programs stands in relation to the evidence".

The diagnostic phase: questions and scope

- Getting the review questions right
  - Definitions of key terms
  - Inclusions and exclusions
  - Apples, or pears?

- Giving the reviewer
  - Clear understanding
  - Attractive and feasible

'The meaningness of things'

- *'It is interesting, the use of language, so for example, what is 'effective' to one person, their idea of effectiveness, is different to another person, so I have to understand what you need'*

- *'So there's a theme coming out here – what is the best service model. And when you say "best" how does that unpack? What does "best" mean to you? You can't use "best" to a reviewer for example...'*

Diagnostics

- *'Now in terms of "ambulatory care" are we talking about primary care, GPs?'*

- *'No.'*

- *'Are we talking about patients?'*

- *'Yes.'*

- *'Are community services in your ambit?'*

- *'I don't think so, no.'*

- *'So basically outpatients, ED and admissions are the ones. OK. All right. That's very helpful.'*

The choice between two 'goods'

- Policymakers are clear about their need
- Negotiations are contested

- Acknowledge complexity
- Differentiate the options
- Explaining reviewer's perspective

- Trust

Negotiating the content

- *'So if I said to you, OK, let's just say there are 3 months, what would you pick as the thing that you most need done to information the activities of the steering group? [silence]'*

- *'I think that is a difficult question and I will explain why... In terms of just one thing, I don't think we can answer that.'*

- *'We want some clear guidance that this is the way we recommend you go. And that will either validate our position or change the course of our position.'*

- *I just wonder if there is an opportunity to maybe split this into two parts of work, and do the first part [first]. I am just thinking about what is going to give you the most value...*

- *Well we'd be guided by you, whatever you think we need to get the right product, then we can do that.'*

Policy implications

- Outcome
  - Time efficient
  - Little refinement
  - Insight about research

- Knowledge brokers
  - More than facilitation
  - Complex negotiation
  - Skills, experience and character

- Coproduction
  - Multiple types of knowledge
  - Policymakers'
    - Policy problem and process
    - Experience of the context
  - Knowledge Broker's
    - Research processes
    - Health system
    - Knowledge translation

Any questions?