WtT 1

Reflecting on the development and use of pragmatic tools for collaborative implementation

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Introduction

Recent literature calls to make implementation science knowledge and methods more usable for practitioners working in real-world settings. In this symposium, we will explore the development and application of three theoretically-informed, co-produced toolkits, each focusing on a high-priority area, including stakeholder engagement, implementation context and tailored implementation. We will discuss how such tools may facilitate implementation by providing a structured process that allows practitioners to work flexibly, collaboratively and with reflexivity within a fluid implementation context. Attendees will be engaged in an interactive discussion on how such tools may help bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Presentation I

Background: Engaging stakeholders in implementation can be challenging due to diverse interests and resource constraints. We developed the Implementation STakeholder Engagement Model (I-STEM), as part of an international, large-scale implementation study (ImpleMentAll) to define key considerations of stakeholder engagement. This study aimed to co-develop the I-STEM into a user-friendly toolkit for implementation practitioners.
Method: Mixed methods study comprising four interlinked activities: 1) scoping review to identify existing approaches to implementation stakeholder engagement and to refine the I-STEM; 2) review of relevant quality improvement (QI) tools to generate toolkit content and specifications; 3) two co-design workshops with implementation practitioners; and 4) usability interviews to test and refine the toolkit. Data were analysed using framework analysis with reference to the I-STEM.
Results: The scoping review included 35 studies, identifying five engagement approaches: participatory, design, consensus, implementation science, and quality improvement. The review of QI tools included 17 toolkits of varying formats. Most identified toolkits lacked a robust theoretical basis. The I-STEM toolkit provides a six-step process for engaging stakeholders in implementation. It includes written guidance, case examples, and a stakeholder engagement blueprint worksheet. Two workshops highlighted a need for working with stakeholders when developing an engagement blueprint. Interviews (n=8) highlighted the flexibility and usability of the toolkit.
Discussion: We designed the I-STEM toolkit with implementation practitioners to address their need for real-world pragmatism. How can the I-STEM toolkit be applied alongside existing theories, frameworks, and models of implementation to support stakeholder engagement and the implementation of evidence-based care?

Presentation II

Background: We developed a toolkit to reflect on and understand implementation context as an important prerequisite to conduct successful implementation work. The toolkit was developed and tested with integrated health and social care teams.
Methods: Guided by a complex intervention development framework and the BANANA model for implementation context assessment, we conducted a mixed-methods study with four interlinked activities: (1) a scoping review to identify existing implementation toolkits and their mechanisms in integrated care; (2) interviews capturing perspectives from healthcare professionals, service users, and decision-makers; (3) seven co-design workshops with diverse stakeholders; and (4) usability testing in two integrated care settings. Data were analysed using thematic analysis.

Results: The toolkit comprises five phases—observe, prioritise, visualise, sounding board, and reflect—that enable users to gain a structured understanding of their implementation context. It acknowledges the dynamic and subjective nature of context and equips implementers with actionable insights to consider during implementation planning.
Discussion: The toolkit fosters reflection among implementers on their context to enable (more) successful implementation. How can we use such a tool as a basis to communicate with relevant stakeholders that hold the decision power in an implementation process? Is using a toolkit an implementation strategy in itself? How can continuous reflection on context become an integral and sustained element of implementation work?

Presentation III

Background: We developed the Integrated Theory-based Framework for Intervention Tailoring Strategies (ItFits), to be evaluated in an international, large-scale implementation study (ImpleMentAll). This study aimed to develop a self-guided toolkit for implementation practitioners.
Method: Mixed methods study comprising three interlinked activities: 1) Conceptual development through conceptual review of tailoring methods and methodologies and workshops. 2) Resource development through workshops and requirements elicitation work with potential users. 3) Pilot-testing through workshops and alpha and beta-testing of web-based utilisation platform.
Results: The conceptual review of Baker's (2015) foundational Cochrane review of tailoring identified how tailoring is operationalised in diverse ways with very different levels of granularity. Internal research team workshops helped generate and refine core ItFits processes. Resource development focused on making evidence-based content (e.g. determinant of practices) and theoretically-informed practices (e.g. extensive stakeholder involvement) embedded in accessible, self-guided processes. Extensive paper-based and digital pilot testing with a range of users across different contexts supported the iterative refinement of the content, processes and format.
Discussion point: The ItFits is a web-based resource that functions as a self-guided toolkit to help implementation teams make sense of the problems they are working on, develop practical solutions to them and roll-out and evaluate those solutions. It seeks to help teams to slow down, to collaboratively reflect, and explore different ways of working. Can such toolkits really help shake up and refresh existing implementation habits and routines, or do they necessarily get watered down over time?