Implementation Science: Finding Common Ground and Perspectives

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IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE: Finding common ground and perspectives
Rationale for Implementation Science

- Despite advances in public health, delivering proven interventions to populations in need remains a challenge – ‘Know-Do’ gap
- Failure of many well-intentioned health policies, programs and practices outside of the controlled settings of research trials and small pilots - need to better understand and respond to the processes and complexities of implementation
- Limited resources create pressure for utilization and uptake
Implementation Science: Multiple Terms and Terminology

- Implementation research
- Implementation research and delivery science
- Implementation and dissemination science
- Intervention research/intervention science
- Quality improvement
- Translational science
- Operations research
- Knowledge translation
- Impact evaluation
- Others...
Range of Definitions of Implementation Science

Application of **systematic learning, research and evaluation** to improve health practice, policy and programs.

– USAID, GH, n.d.

Implementation science is the **study of methods** to promote the integration of research findings and evidence into healthcare policy and practice.

– NIH/FIC

The study of methods to improve the uptake, implementation, and translation of research findings into routine and common practices.

– PEPFAR

Effective IRDS involves using **scientific methods** to address the challenges of implementation and scale-up. IRDS draws upon the methods, tools, and approaches for: enhancing equity and efficiency, promoting a culture of evidence-informed learning, engaging stakeholders, and improving decisions on policies and programs to achieve better health outcomes. IRDS is a type of health policy and systems research that draws on many traditions and disciplines of research and practice. It builds on operations research, participatory action research, management science, quality improvement, implementation science, and impact evaluation.

– STATEMENT ON IRDS

Implementation research is the **scientific inquiry** into questions concerning implementation—the act of carrying an intention into effect, which in health research can be policies, programmes, or individual practices (collectively called interventions).

– PETERS ET AL. 2013. BMJ.
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What is Implementation Science?

- Goal is to accelerate adoption and integration of evidence-based interventions to change practice patterns, health behaviors, and inform public health policy decisions that ultimately will lead to lasting health impact at scale.

- Transdisciplinary scientific approach to understand and strengthen implementation – scaling up, sustaining, as well as improving quality, efficiency, equity, and/or effectiveness – of policies, programs, and practices in real-world settings.

- Iterative process to engage a range of stakeholders with the aim of achieving sustainable adoption, fidelity, and coverage of evidence-informed practice.
What is Implementation Science?

Ideally, implementation science:

- Directly informs **decisions or is embedded** within processes to address implementation barriers
- Is driven by **implementers or intended beneficiaries** of interventions
- Is a **collaborative** effort that engages diverse stakeholders
- Supports a culture of **continuous learning and adaptation**
- Has a strong focus on evidence utilization
What sets IS apart?
What sets implementation science apart?

- Multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary
- Main outcomes are factors such as acceptability, adoption, feasibility, appropriateness, fidelity, coverage, equity, sustainability, and costs
- Takes place in ‘real world’ rather than controlled settings
  - Existing health care system and network of stakeholders
- Strong focus on context
  - Political, social, economic, cultural
  - Understand how contextual factors influence implementation
- Central role of implementers and users
  - Health managers, policy makers
  - Engaged throughout the IS process
- Flexible and adaptive
Benefits of an IS Approach

- Implementation science helps decision-makers to:
  - Engage a range of stakeholders
  - Develop, evaluate and select interventions
  - Identify who can benefit most and who should be targeted
  - Understand context
  - Adapt or adopt interventions to meet the needs of real-world settings
  - Address implementation barriers and challenges
  - Assess fidelity of implementation
  - Assess the global health impact
Challenges with Implementation Science

- Range of definitions creates confusion over what constitutes implementation science
- Implementation may not be seen as a scientific issue by policy makers and practitioners
- Research community may not view IS as part of their role
- Brings together un-natural partners
  - Little natural contact between researchers and implementers
  - Qualitative and quantitative researchers live in different worlds (different departments, techniques, languages)
- Minimal funding to drive research
- Methodologically challenging - complex implementation effectiveness methods and integration of quantitative and qualitative data (mixed methods)
Thank You

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