

Building Ageing Research Capacity Colloquium

Research Development and Communication Processes Workshops

Morning Workshop 2–Dissemination and Translation of Ageing Research

Day 2–5 July
10:35–11:55 AM

Presented by:



ARC/NHMRC Research
Network in Ageing Well

Contributors to the background paper:

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International discussant:

- Professor Marcia Ory, Director, Health Promotion and Aging, Rural Public Health, Texas A&M University System

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Disclaimer:

This is a background document that has been produced by the ARC/NHMRC Research Network in Ageing Well and is only to be used for the purpose of informing discussion at the workshop on 5 July 2006. The materials contained herein are not available for the purposes of quotation until the workshop discussion has been incorporated. An updated version will be sent to all workshop participants and will be made available on the Network website (www.ageingwell.edu.au).

Any statements about proposed Network actions or directions are statements of possibility only. Directions will be determined at a later date after taking into consideration the discussion at the workshop.

Research Network
Convened at



The University of Sydney

Major Partners



Dissemination and Translation Workshop

Background Paper

The materials below have been provided prior to the colloquium so that participants in the Dissemination and translation of ageing research workshop have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the aims of the workshop and a brief background summary. Included in these materials are two exercises which participants are asked to complete as far as possible prior to attending the workshop in order to facilitate the discussion.

Overall aim of the workshop:

- To raise and discuss issues relating to the dissemination and translation of ageing research
- To identify future directions for the Ageing Well Research Network and others to take to add value to existing programs and to facilitate future research dissemination and translation.

Workshop format:

5 min	Introduction	Discussion of key issues using an example of Benevolent Society planning for an innovative service model – Barbara Squires
5 min	Possible directions	Discussion of possible directions for the Network – Matthew Carroll
60 min	Open discussion	Discussion from the floor on the issues and directions raised and other topics raised by workshop participants. The discussion will include comments from our International Discussant Professor Marcia Ory.

Issues to be discussed

- Communication between research and policy/administration – a consideration of types of communication approaches and possible challenges to linkage and exchange (see participant exercises on pages 4-5)
- Implementation of research
- Evaluation of outcomes changes to policy and practice

Possible Ageing Well Research Network Actions to be considered

- Inform researchers about the various ageing constituencies so that they can better communicate with them and identify policy and program needs when planning research?
- Promote the use of the Literature Database on Ageing Research among policy makers and service providers with a greater emphasis on translation in order to connect the “what” to the “why”?
- Conduct targeted workshops at key constituency conferences – e.g. workshops on how to make use of research at the Aged and Community Services Australia (ACSA) conference and on policy-based practice at the Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG) Conference?. These activities would roll out as the Network grows and would involve different professional groups such as social workers, economists etc.
- Advocacy to research funders regarding the need for detailed dissemination and translation planning?

Background summary

The Commonwealth Office for Older Australians commissioned a review of healthy ageing research in Australia in 2000. The review authors consulted with key representatives from the main stakeholders (consumers, service providers, policy officers, researchers, industry leaders) and identified the following barriers to the effective use of research findings:

- Imposition of political imperatives (“policy on the run”, or “policy on the back foot”)
- Lack of timely information provided by researchers to policy makers
- Researchers publish in academic journals where the information is not available to stakeholders until years after data collection
- Misunderstanding by researcher and data gatherers of the policy process
- Misunderstanding by policy and decision makers of the relevance of information in policy relevant terms
- Lack of appropriate enumeration of available data, etc; and
- Inappropriate and/or poor presentation of research findings and information.

(Kendig, Andrews, Browning, Quine & Parsons, 2000)

Questions for consideration:

1. To what extent do these barriers continue to prevent effective use of research findings?
2. What progress have we made in reducing/removing these barriers?

In addition, Kendig et al. identified the following issues and suggestions to improve the dissemination of research findings:

- The problem is not the quantity of data but the quality and its accessibility
- There is inadequate translation of the available information between the providers of the information and the different user groups
- Some audiences see the conduct of research as an answer in itself, and do not always know how to use the information and findings
- There is demand for evidence-based research which is presented simply in a way appropriate to the differing audiences
- Research should be disseminated widely in different formats depending on the information level required
- Information needs to be made available to those who are most at risk, e.g. older people of low socio-economic status
- Researchers need to be more active in promoting their findings and in demonstrating the practical applications
- Consumer groups noted that findings from publicly funded research should be made publicly available, even if the findings do not fit the interests of policy makers

Questions for consideration:

1. Are each of the above issues still relevant and/or appropriate?
2. How far have we come in addressing some of these issues?

In "Ideas and Influence: Social science and public policy in Australia" (2005), Peter Saunders and James Walter proposed the following three bridge building approaches through which research can influence policy:

- Influencing professional opinion (eg publication in peer-reviewed journals);
- Influencing public opinion (dissemination through the media);
- Influencing policy opinion directly by engaging with policy practitioners (relies on personal contact with those involved in policy and may also result from research publications).

Questions for consideration:

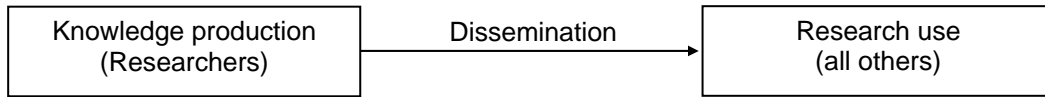
1. Are researchers more comfortable with some of these bridges rather than others?
2. What are the respective strengths and limitations of each mode - can we use them better?
3. Do policy makers respond more to some types of influence than others?

Examples of dissemination and translation

- Jonathon Lomas (2005) cites the example of the use of citrus juice to prevent scurvy among British sailors. Lomas notes that there was a gap of 253 years between the initial discovery and the final uptake by the British Board of Trade. Lomas summarises the reasons behind this "Know-Do Gap" as follows:
 - Poor institutional memory and communication
 - Implementation contrary to vested interests
 - Major challenge to accepted scientific wisdom
 - Inadequate links between those doing the research and those that could implement the results.
- International Discussant - During the workshop Professor Marcia Ory, Director, Health Promotion and Aging, Rural Public Health, Texas A&M University System, will comment on her research into translating ageing research and her experiences with The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation "Active For Life" program which disseminates information on healthy ageing and is looking at ways to deliver and sustain a research-based physical activity program to large numbers of mid-life and older adults (see www.activeforlife.info/newsroom/e_newsletter.html for a copy of the latest Active For Life newsletter).
- Network supported examples of dissemination of information
 - Ageing Well Data Archive – provides Network Participant Members with access to 56 ageing research dataset, plus access to 1500 datasets
 - Note that simply providing access to data does not ensure that it is used and that a consultation process is now in place to discuss the how to improve the archive, identify potential user groups and develop targeted strategies for encouraging them to make maximal use of the resource. This process involves representatives from stakeholders and potential users.
 - Literature Database on Ageing Research – a database on Australia literature and grants relating to ageing research over the last 5 years
 - Has similar issues to the Ageing Well Data Archive in terms of promoting usage

Models of dissemination and translation

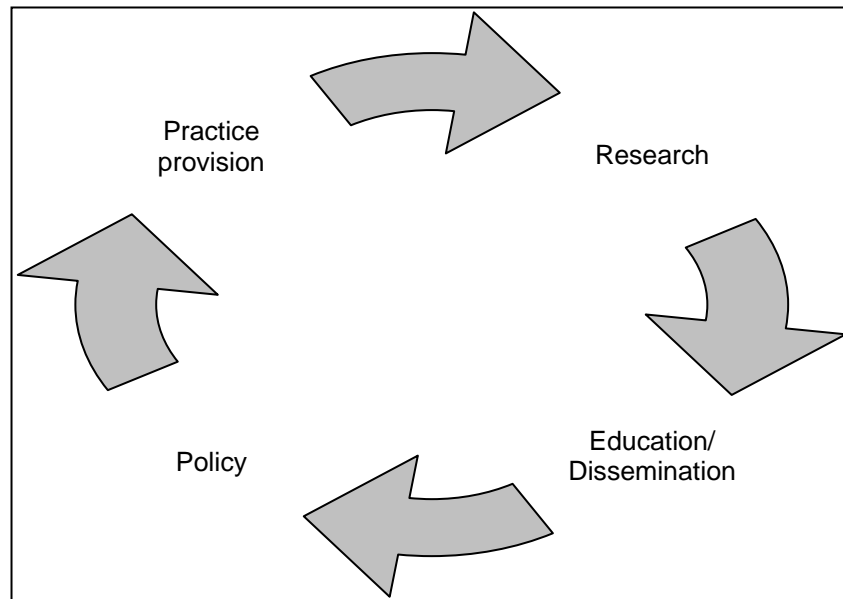
Linear Model - Research & Development approach (adapted from Reeve, 2003):



This simple dichotomous approach ignores the interplay between researchers, policy makers and administrators as well as the input of the above, and other key stakeholders into the process.

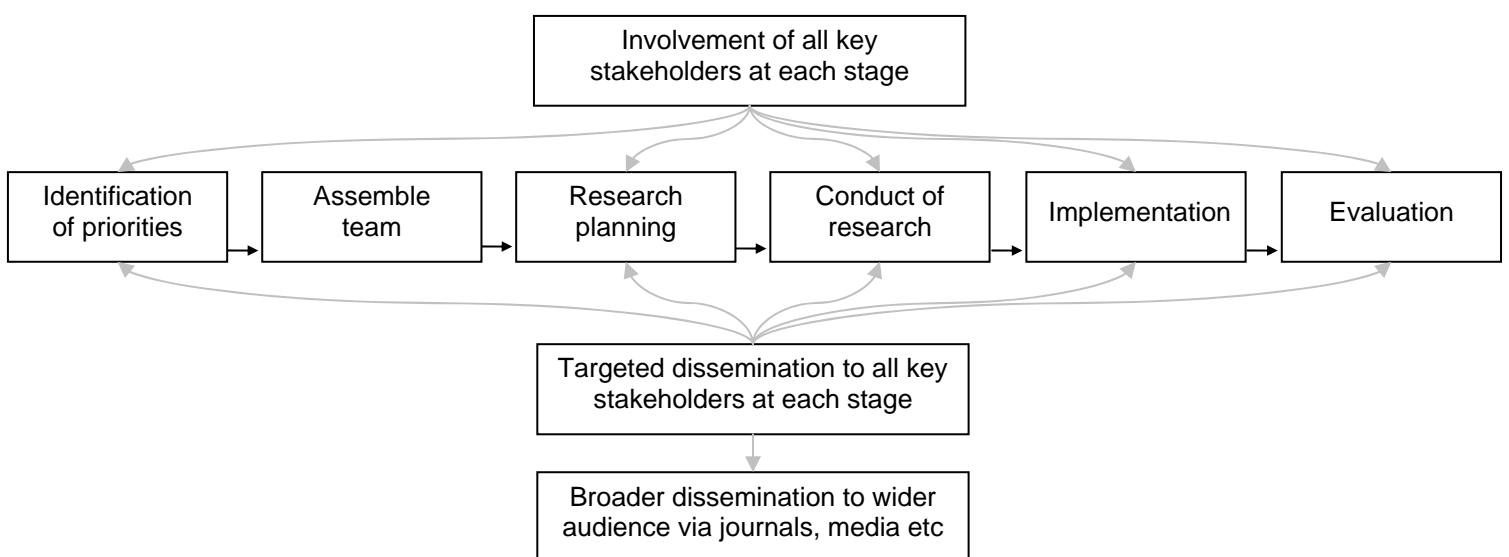
Circular Model:

Dissemination and translation is commonly depicted as part of a circular process whereby the outcomes of the policy change feed back into further research.



Inclusive Model:

The diagram below is a depiction of the approach suggested by Jonathon Lomas and others whereby key stakeholders, including consumer and industry groups, are consulted and informed at all stages of the process from the planning stage to the final implementation and evaluation of outcomes.



Questions for consideration:

1. Participants should consider to what extent these models capture the experience of dissemination, research, policy and practice interactions that we each have?
2. Do these models help us to understand what is involved in the dissemination and translation process?

Participant Exercise 1 - Targeting dissemination and translation to particular audience types:

To be completed as far as possible prior to the workshop

Lomas (1997) discusses the need to adopt the appropriate message style for each target audience. In Table 1 below, Lomas identifies the different audience type, type of information required and the preferred format that the information should be provided:

Table 1: A summary of audience types, their research needs and preferred information formats

AUDIENCE	TYPE OF DECISION-MAKER	RESEARCH NEEDS	PREFERRED FORMATS
LEGISLATIVE	Politician Bureaucrat Interest Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem Definition • Affirmation Of Assumed Causes • Policy "Ideas" (Health Policy Analysis) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person-To-Person • Overview In Brief Memo • Media
ADMINISTRATIVE	Program Manager Regional Administrator Hospital Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Evaluation • Practice Variation • Cost-Effectiveness (Health Service Research) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Special' Contacts • Summary Report • Dedicated Seminar
CLINICAL	Practitioner Professional Society Expert Panel Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness • Ethics • Patient Preference (Clinical Research) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleagues • Action-Oriented Synthesis
INDUSTRIAL	Company Scientist Corporate Executive Venture Capitalist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketable Product (Biomedical, Information Technology Research) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends On Scientist Vs Non-Scientist
Other?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
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Questions for consideration:

1. The above table was developed in the context of the Canadian health system. Is it relevant to the ageing arena in Australia?
2. Are there any audiences not identified by Lomas that should be considered, such as consumers, general public, service providers or the media?
3. Additional cells have been added to the bottom of the table. Please add in whatever groups you see to be relevant and identify the relevant decision-makers, research needs and information formats for each group.

Participant Exercise 2 - Challenges to linkage and exchange:

To be completed as far as possible prior to the workshop

The Canadian Health Services Research Foundation convened a workshop entitled “Issues in linkage and exchange between researchers and decision makers” in 1999 which involved over 100 researchers and decision makers. Participants were asked to identify the main challenges to linkage and exchange and these are summarised in the table below (adapted from CHSRF, 1999)

Table 2: Challenges to linkage and exchange

RESEARCH ENVIRONMENTS	DECISION MAKING ORGANISATIONS	OTHER AGEING CONSTITUENCY GROUPS
Time ◇ not enough given current workloads ◇ finding commonly available time to meet	Time ◇ linkage with researchers not usually rewarded (financially or otherwise) ◇ easier to justify commitment for ongoing programs of research than for single projects	
Timelines ◇ not enough lead time from funding agency for development of linkage research ◇ decision makers often need results faster than the research process can produce them	Understanding the research process ◇ poor understanding of what is involved in doing, and few opportunities to learn	
Multiple decision maker partners ◇ resource intensive to tailor a single project to the (sometimes competing) needs and agendas of multiple decision maker partners	Format of communications/ presentations ◇ often hard to understand researchers' presentations of ideas or findings	
Finding decision makers ◇ no obvious or single “point of entry” into decision maker organisation reasons ◇ broad array of potential partners, with no way of knowing which ones are influential	Potential volatility of findings ◇ the control over release of findings for ‘political’ is not always compatible with researchers’ publication needs	
Moving targets ◇ frequent personnel changes discourage investment of time to establish linkage ◇ frequent restructuring makes it difficult to find stable areas for evaluation		
Interaction structures ◇ no established structures sensitive to the particular needs of the research interaction		
Other?		

Questions for Consideration

1. The above table was developed in the context of the Canadian health system. Is it relevant to the ageing arena in Australia?
2. Are there any other issues not identified above that should be included? e.g.
 - Researchers - tension between funding body aims and research outcomes
 - Decision makers – difficulty in identifying appropriate research
3. The table above does not include challenges experienced by consumer groups or other constituencies. What challenges to linkage and exchange do you see for these groups? e.g.:
 - Being left out of the loop (either in terms of priority setting and/or implementation)
 - Understanding of the research process (as per decision makers)

References

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Summary of Ageing Well Research Network activities to date

The Network aims to generate research that informs action towards national goals and facilitate communication among researchers and with key community, government, and industry constituencies. The Network is overseen by a Management Committee of key researchers including the convenors of our State hubs and research themes. The Network Advisory Group plays a key role in this process by providing advice on research agendas, translating and communicating findings, and facilitating the formation of research partnerships. The Network's Advisory Group includes representation from the following key national and state connection points:

Aged and Community Services Australia
Alzheimer's Australia
Australian Association of Gerontology
Centre on Ageing, The Benevolent Society
Council on the Ageing
Office for an Ageing Australia, Department of Health and Ageing

The key actions taken by the Network to date to facilitate the dissemination and translation of ageing research include the following:

- 1) The Network has over 300 members who are updated on key events and opportunities in the ageing arena through the following avenues
 - Network website (www.ageingwell.edu.au)
 - Regular email bulletins and one-off email alerts
 - Occasional Newsletters
- 2) In addition to individual members, we are encouraging those organisations which are consumers of research to join the Network. These Organisational Members are included on our mailing list as well as being available for advisory and consultative roles with interest groups.
- 3) Wider dissemination is achieved through communication with other key groups including the Australian Association of Gerontology, Ageing Research Online and the International Research Centre of Healthy Ageing and Longevity (IRCHAL).
- 4) A web-based Resource Collection on Ageing is being developed on the Network website which includes Network Theme background papers, Network priorities, copies of seminar presentations etc)
- 5) Literature Database on Ageing Research – a database on Australia literature and grants relating to ageing research over the last 5 years (compiled by Research Centre for Gender, Health and Ageing at the University of Newcastle (formerly the Centre for Research and Education in Ageing). This database is available through the Australian Research Online (ARO) website (www.aro.gov.au).
- 6) Ageing Well Data Archive – the archive, available at <http://ageing-well.anu.edu.au/webview/index.jsp>, is an initiative of the Network's Population Research Strategies theme hub at ANU. The archive provides online access for Network members to 56 datasets of interest to people working in the area of ageing. In addition, Network members have access to the full Australian Social Sciences Data Archive (ASSDA) catalogue, comprising approximately 1,500 datasets. Access is provided via a standard web browser using the Nesstar system.
- 7) State-based symposia on ageing research have taken place in Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland and others are planned for Victoria and Tasmania. These symposia include representatives from research, policy, services and other ageing constituency backgrounds.
- 8) Involvement in key events including the AAG and IRCHAL conferences and this Colloquium. The Network is also sponsoring the Emerging Researchers in Ageing Conference (ERA).
- 9) Key international visitors are being brought to Australia, in collaboration with other national organisations, to collaborate on the Network Theme Areas and present their research to target audiences.