A formative evaluation of Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRC): institutional entrepreneurship for service innovation

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Declared competing interests of authors: none

Published September 2014
DOI: 10.3310/hsdr02310

Plain English summary

A formative evaluation of CLAHRC
Health Services and Delivery Research 2014; Vol. 2: No. 31
DOI: 10.3310/hsdr02310

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We examined the role of institutional entrepreneurship, through which individuals and groups transform existing practices to promote sustainable change, in transferring and translating scientific research into practice. We carried out detailed case studies in four Collaborations for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRCs) – new kinds of research/health service collaboratives in England. We engaged in both qualitative case studies and quantitative social network analysis methods, to understand the development of CLAHRCs as a kind of translational research initiative. Drawing on the qualitative data we show that the founding conditions of CLAHRCs, in terms of local context and the key focal actors, played an important role in shaping the initial design of the CLAHRCs. The initial CLAHRC designs then shaped the subsequent roll-out of the CLAHRCs, acting to lock-in CLAHRCs to specific paths of future development. The effect of the lock-in was moderated by a desire from CLAHRC actors to learn from one another. In addition, we developed five different archetype models of knowledge translation, and provide insights into the critical institutional work and leadership challenges associated with the different CLAHRC archetypes. Finally, the quantitative research highlighted systematic variations in actors’ ability to bridge the research–practice boundary; however, the CLAHRC initiative has led to the development of more relationships that span the research–practice divide. Overall, we contribute to understanding of translational research initiatives by offering the clear guidance that strategies for change are not built independently from the context in which they are embedded.
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This report
The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HS&DR programme or one of its proceeding programmes as project number 09/1809/1073. The contractual start date was in November 2009. The final report began editorial review in July 2013 and was accepted for publication in December 2013. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HS&DR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors’ report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HS&DR programme or the Department of Health. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HS&DR programme or the Department of Health.

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