Research Brief

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Scoping review identifies significant number of knowledge translation theories, models and frameworks with limited use

Summary

We completed a scoping review of KT theories, models and frameworks that have been used to guide dissemination or implementation of evidence-based interventions targeted to prevention and/or management of cancer or other chronic diseases. We applied an iterative approach called the BeHEMoTh framework to inform our search protocol and to build a list of names of KT theories, models and frameworks. Our scoping review identified 596 studies reporting on the use of 159 KT theories, models and frameworks. A majority of the identified theories, models or frameworks were used in 5 or fewer studies, with many used once.

Implications

We found a significant number of KT theories, models and frameworks with a limited evidence base describing their use in practice. Our results suggest that a decision support tool to help end users identify an appropriate theory, model or framework to inform their KT activities would be beneficial.

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What is the current situation?

- KT theories, models and frameworks are beneficial when implementing and sustaining evidence-based chronic disease and cancer control practices and policies. However, they may be underutilized or not used appropriately.

- There are over 100 identified KT theories, models and frameworks to choose from. Yet few studies have methodically examined their use in practice or research.

What is the objective?

- To conduct a scoping review of KT theories, models and frameworks that have been used to guide dissemination or implementation of evidence-based interventions targeted to prevention and/or management of cancer or other chronic diseases.

How was the review conducted?

- We applied an iterative approach called the BeHEMoTh (Behavior of interest; Health context; Exclusions; Models or Theories) framework to search 3 databases from 2000-2016; searching using names of theories/models/frameworks, cited reference searching, and grey literature searches were also used to supplement the search results.

- Screening and data abstraction were conducted in duplicate by 2 independent reviewers.

What did the review find?

- We identified 596 studies (plus 47 companion reports) reporting on the use of 159 KT theories, models or frameworks used to inform 627 KT interventions.

- Only 3 theories/models/frameworks were used in more than 10% of the included studies: Social Cognitive Theory, Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change, and Health Belief Model. A majority (87%) of the theories/models/frameworks were used in less than 1% (i.e., 5 or fewer) of the included studies, with 60% used once.

- Most frequently, the identified theories/models/frameworks were used to inform planning/design (81%), implementation (67%) and evaluation (55%) activities.

- The context included cancer in 350 studies (59%) or other chronic diseases in 295 studies (49%); the 5 most common cancer types were breast, general/all types, colorectal, cervical, lung. The 5 most common chronic diseases were cardiovascular, diabetes, general/all types, obesity/overweight, other/unspecified.

- 85% of KT interventions targeted patients/public, 31% targeted healthcare professionals, and 23% targeted organizations.