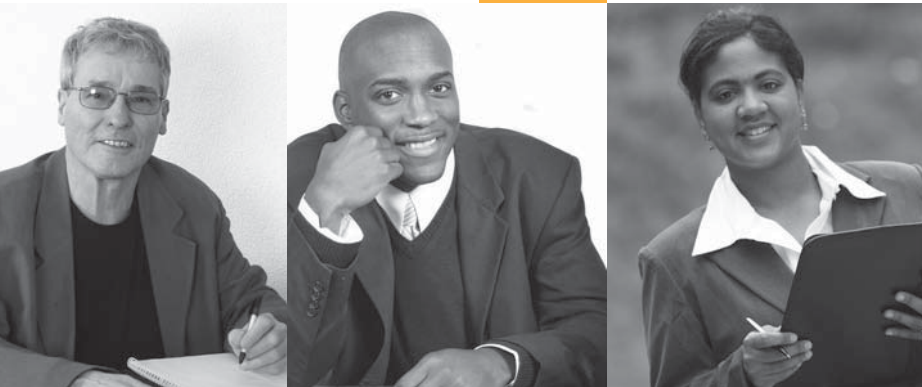




Central East
ATTC

Unifying science, education
and services to transform lives.

An Overview of Evidence-Based Practices:



Implementing Science-Based Interventions in Practical Settings

Evidence-Based Practices: What are They?

By Paula Jones and Aaron Williams

It is called the “cardiac assessment” and it can be applied to various types of interventions. Those carrying out the intervention “know in their heart” that it works. Certainly, there are many circumstances in which we can trust intuition. However, it is much better to have concrete evidence that something works than to simply believe that it does.

On the other end of the spectrum from the cardiac assessment are evidence-based practices. These are interventions for which there is consistent scientific evidence demonstrating that the desired outcomes are obtained. Rigorous assessments, such as multiple randomized clinical trials, consensus reviews of available science, or expert opinion based on clinical observation, are conducted to identify such practices. Practices that are subjected to less rigorous review are sometimes called promising practices or best practices.

The advantage for service providers in using evidence-based practices is that there is a very strong probability that the specified outcomes will be achieved. For providers working in a challenging field like substance abuse treatment, in which relapse is common for patients, the use of evidence-based practices can give them a decided edge as they work to help people overcome their addictions.

Not only can the use of evidence-based practices improve the final outcome, it can also improve the work environment and an agency’s bottom line. Staff have clear guidance on how to carry out their duties and the expectation that their efforts will show results. Funders have the assurance that resources are being directed toward something that will work, not something that might work.

Technology Transfer: Facilitating the Use of Evidence-Based Practices

In order to speed the use of any innovation into regular and routine practice, a process referred to as Technology Transfer is used. While the scientific community differs over the specific definition of technology transfer and the components of this process, simply put, it is defined

CTN Nodes

The CTN is made up of 16 regional research centers, called nodes, distributed across the country. Each node is a partnership between research institutions and community treatment programs (CTPs). The nodes have areas of specialization such as targeting specific populations or investigating certain treatment modalities.

Appalachian Tri-State	Northern New England
California–Arizona	Ohio Valley
Delaware Valley	Oregon/Hawaii
Florida	Pacific Region
Long Island Regional	Southern Consortium
Mid-Atlantic	Southwest
New England	Texas
New York	Washington

as the multidimensional process that intentionally promotes the use of an innovation. Over the past year, the Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC) network, funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), has been reviewing the research literature in order to develop a common language and understanding of Technology Transfer and its core components. The ATTCs are a network of 14 regional centers and a national office that are charged with improving the addiction treatment field through the dissemination of evidence-based practices. After reviewing the research, the ATTC network came up with a more formal definition of Technology Transfer and its core components to help guide its work related to disseminating evidence-based practices.

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER – A multidimensional process that intentionally promotes the use of an innovation. Technology transfer begins during the development of an innovation, continues through its dissemination, and extends into its early implementation. This process requires multiple stakeholders and resources, and involves activities related to the translation and adoption of an innovation. Technology transfer is designed to accelerate the diffusion of an innovation.

DEVELOPMENT – Creating and initially evaluating an innovation. An innovation can be an idea, technology, treatment or method.

TRANSLATION – Explaining the essential elements and relevance of an innovation, then packaging it to facilitate dissemination.

DISSEMINATION – Promoting awareness of an innovation with the goal of facilitating adoption and implementation. Dissemination strategies include raising awareness, building knowledge, and distributing materials.

ADOPTION – The process of deciding whether to use an innovation. Adoption may or may not lead to implementation.

IMPLEMENTATION – Incorporating an innovation into routine practice. Implementation ideally includes a range of strategies designed to address individual, organizational, and systemic characteristics (e.g., skills training, administrative buy-in, and policy changes).

DIFFUSION – The planned or spontaneous spread of an innovation.

How are Evidence-Based Practices Developed and Identified?

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), part of the National Institutes of Health, supports over 85 percent of the world’s research on the health aspects of drug abuse and addiction. NIDA’s mission is to lead the nation in bringing the power of science to bear on drug abuse and addiction. NIDA works to ensure the rapid and effective transfer of scientific data to policy makers, drug abuse practitioners, other health care practitioners, and the general public. Part of this effort is NIDA’s Clinical Trials Network (CTN).

The mission of the CTN is to use science as a vehicle to improve the quality of drug abuse treatment across the country. The CTN provides a forum by which NIDA, treatment researchers, and community-based providers can cooperatively develop, validate, refine, and deliver new treatment options to patients receiving treatment

Diffusion of an Innovation

In order to illustrate our work, the ATTC Network has developed a cutting edge conceptual model of the diffusion of an innovation shown below.

First, during development, the innovation is designed and initially evaluated. Next, during translation, the essential elements and relevance of the innovation are explained and the innovation is packaged to facilitate its spread. In dissemination, awareness about the innovation is promoted with the goal of encouraging its adoption. Adoption is not a single decision, but a process of deciding to use the innovation. Finally, during implementation, the innovation is incorporated into routine practice

in “real world” settings. Across the continuum, bidirectional communication is a critical component and is represented by a continuous feedback loop.

Highlighted within the conceptual model is technology transfer, a multidimensional process that intentionally promotes the use of an innovation. Technology transfer begins during development, continues through dissemination, and extends into early implementation. This process requires multiple stakeholders and resources, and involves activities related to translation and adoption. Technology transfer is designed to accelerate the diffusion of an innovation.

