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Community Health / Policy

Abstract Title

Connecting for Care: Understanding Canada's Knowledge Sharing Networks in Child Development and Rehabilitation

Background

Connecting for Care is a mixed-method social network analysis case study of Canada's child development and rehabilitation (CD&R) network. Algorithmic and geographic visualizations can be used to facilitate analysis and qualitative data gathering, and to provide insight on the efficiency and accessibility of knowledge sharing connections.

Objective

We explore social ties and knowledge translation (KT) patterns among healthcare providers, families, researchers, and KT support personnel to further understand how these groups connect to one another.

Methods

A cross-sectional national online survey collected respondents' KT connections across Canada's 10 provinces and 3 territories, which included being asked to name up to five people with whom they connect to share or receive knowledge pertaining to CD&R. With this information, we created egocentric maps showing inter/intra-provincial/territorial knowledge exchange patterns. These visualizations were presented to participants during interviews to further our understanding of network structure and factors influencing tie development.

Results

We identified 596 connections among 622 individuals (234 respondents; 388 non-respondents). Analysis revealed 452 intra- and 144 inter-provincial/territorial ties, with connections concentrated in densely populated areas. We generated 13 provincial/territorial maps and 4 regional visualizations for interpretation. An average distance of 3.6 people separate any two individuals, suggesting relatively efficient knowledge exchange despite Canada's vast geography. Knowledge brokers, people who connect otherwise unconnected individuals, were primarily concentrated in Manitoba and Ontario within our sample. Participants valued intra-provincial connections for exchanging context-specific information while inter-provincial connections provided insight into potential innovations to adopt to their local context.

Conclusion

The predominance of intra-provincial ties reflects the importance of region-specific expertise and the opportunity to support the implementation of evidence-based practices across Canada. Qualitative findings will be used to enhance our understanding of network structure, and to identify potential strategies to strengthen the overall knowledge sharing network in the field of CD&R in Canada.

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