

'Practice-based Research' and 'Research-based Practice' - Lessons learned from a Practice - Research Collaborative

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Background and Workshop Objectives:

Despite efforts to explicitly integrate social work practice and research this goal often remains elusive or mere lip-service. Practitioners and researchers seldom speak the “same language,” and despite good intentions efforts of integration are often marred by different values, agendas, and distinct knowledge and skill sets. In the current evidence-based practice climate, the integration of practice and research are no longer optional. They are an explicit part of the steps outlined in the evidence-based model. Treatments, interventions, and programs are expected to be evaluated, and findings are to be “fed back” in order to inform and shape practice. Yet, it is unlikely that social work practitioners have either the time, the resources or the skills to formally evaluate complex social work interventions and programs, necessitating the need for researchers who are trained in the gathering and evaluation of data. On the other hand, social work researchers often have little knowledge about the issues and challenges of social work practice, may not be interested in conducting research in practice settings, or in many cases, may not have access to such settings.- Translational research and implementation models tend to be one-directional and primarily concerned about how current research findings can more quickly be disseminated to practice communities or how evidence-based interventions can be transported into a practice community. Yet, models of practice-research collaboratives assume bi-directionality, with practice informing research agendas and methods, and research findings, in turn, informing practice. The broad aim of this workshop is to lead the audience into a discussion about the benefits and challenges of practice-research collaboratives in social work, and to present and discuss factors that can promote or hinder such efforts.

Methods:

To accomplish the workshop objectives the following methods will be used: Illustration, presentation, (small) group discussion, and ‘Question and Answer.’ Handouts and other written materials will be passed out.

1. Illustration:

The workshop will begin with a presentation and review of a specific effort within a traditionally practice-oriented multidisciplinary psychiatric setting (including social workers, psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, and public health professionals) that had been striving to address a growing community problem, namely the rise of deliberate self-harm (DSH) among its youth. This part of the workshop will include a presentation and review of: the setting and practice