

COMMENTARY

Implementation research in Primary Care (Part 2): How to conduct implementation research?

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Abstract

This paper is the second paper on implementation research in primary care. This paper outlines key processes for conducting implementation research, emphasising the importance of selecting relevant theories, models, and frameworks to guide each stage. Three core steps common for implementation research were described: identifying determinants that influence implementation, mapping appropriate strategies to address these determinants, and evaluating implementation outcomes. Determinant frameworks such as the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research and the Theoretical Domains Framework help researchers understand contextual barriers and facilitators, while resources like the ERIC taxonomy and Behaviour Change Technique Taxonomy support strategy selection. Evaluation frameworks, including Proctor's implementation outcomes and RE-AIM, enable systematic assessment of implementation success. This paper also highlights the essential role of stakeholder engagement throughout the research process. Together, these components offer a structured, theory-informed approach to support effective, scalable, and sustainable implementation efforts in primary care.

Introduction

Implementation research is a powerful tool to support the adoption, and scale-up of interventions and their integration into health systems. Implementation research helps to identify the context where effective implementation can take place and support the process of iterative refinement needed for successful adaptation. Nevertheless, conducting implementation research is often viewed as a complex endeavour as it involves multiple phases, a wide range of approaches, various stakeholders, and outcomes.¹ Nevertheless, as the field progresses, there is now a clearer guidance on how implementation research can be systematically conducted to achieve effective outcomes.

In our previous article, we introduced the concept of implementation research, highlighted its importance in advancing the field of primary care, and described its characteristics in comparison with the more well-known quality improvement approach, which is more commonly adopted among healthcare providers in improving healthcare delivery. In this second part of the article "Implementation Research in Primary Care", we provide step-by-step guidance on how to undertake implementation research focussing on the key processes in conducting implementation research.

Frameworks for conducting implementation research

In implementation research, the use of frameworks is crucial as they can help in planning, developing relevant implementation strategies, clarifying key constructs in the various phases of implementation research, and help to understand why a certain implementation succeed