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Change Management and a New Era for Systematic Reviewers

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Where TAR teams are based



BACKGROUND

During the last year, the National Institute for Clinical Excellence has been implementing new forms of technology assessment reports, responding to the needs of a changing public health research agenda.

- ✦ The HTA programme in the UK was established in 1993, and is the largest and longest running of the Department of Health's national research programmes. Seven Universities work with NICE to deliver this programme under the TAR call-off contract.
- ✦ Up until September 2006, the technology assessment report (TAR) was the product TAR teams worked on, but pressure for value for money has increased due to the introduction of full economic costing (fEC) at Universities. fEC has caused the price of a standard technology assessment report to double. The timescale for carrying out a full TAR is also very long, normally over six months.
- ✦ The Department of Health identified a need to separate TARs into two different products: Multiple Technology Assessments (MTAs) and Single Technology Assessments (STAs.)
- ✦ Birmingham University has spent the past five years training up a team of skilled systematic reviewers to undertake TARs/MTAs. The skill mix needed to carry out an STA is different, with more senior and health economic input needed.
- ✦ There is far less scope for publication arising from STAs, but the University needs more publications from staff to contribute to the research assessment exercise.

OBJECTIVES

- ✦ To assess ways in which the team can cope with the conflicting demands of University and contractor.
- ✦ To identify best practice when coping with moving goalposts.
- ✦ To gather data and carry out qualitative research into the TAR teams and the changes happening to their remit.
- ✦ To conduct a change management assessment exercise to analyse how TAR teams have reacted to this period of change.

This research has been carried out on the West Midlands Health Technology Assessment Collaboration, University of Birmingham.

CREATING A CULTURE OF ADAPTABILITY

Organizational culture is closely linked to success in coping with change management. The Birmingham University TAR team have worked hard to create a culture of adaptability. Robust administration procedures, knowledgeable and professional administrators create a framework in which the team can work with confidence. Being at the forefront of IT developments and having dedicated staff to lead on this assists the team because they have a strong infrastructure in which to work.

Opening up channels of communication is critical, both within the team and without. Letting colleagues know when there is a problem early means that we can solve problems early. Series of structured meetings and frequent email exchanges help the flow of information.

Being committed to training and development means that we are an organization which values learning and encourages staff to acquire new skill sets. Taking on new work and new challenges becomes the norm. Encouraging new collaborations and networks and collaborating across geographical areas means that the team constantly evolves and develops, and means that the team embraces change rather than avoids it. Working on multiple projects at the same time, working in a multi-disciplinary environment and creating trans-discipline teams all contribute to staff flexibility. Staff are not set in their ways or tied to over-prescriptive job descriptions.

Empowering people to make decisions means that staff are not afraid to try new things and are not afraid to fail.

Rewarding performance when things work well encourages staff to take the plunge and move outside their comfort zone, as this is applauded.

Focusing on individuals strengths and weaknesses means that we use our resources effectively, and acknowledge the role of the individual as being important to the team's success.

Fostering an organic approach to change rather than a prescriptive approach enables the team to develop in a natural way over time.

Single Technology Assessments and Multiple Technology Assessments – Key Differences

	STA	MTA
Unit size	0.33	1
Protocol	No	Yes
Time given to team	8 weeks	25 weeks
Remit	Critique of manufacturers submission	Systematic review and economic evaluation
Output	Evidence Review Group Report (ERG)	Technology Assessment Report (NICE TAR)
Publication	Article	HTA Monograph

RESULTS

The WMHTAC team have achieved a high level of flexibility and innovation which has allowed us to meet the evolving requirements of the HTA programme. Creating a culture of adaptability within the team has achieved the following results:

- ✦ Flexible multi-skilled workforce
- ✦ Co-ordination of team members
- ✦ Creation of a supportive culture
- ✦ Non-hierarchical structure
- ✦ Infrastructure development
- ✦ Effective resource management – lateral thinking
- ✦ Low turnover but development within roles
- ✦ Enthusiasm and ownership
- ✦ High profile of the team within the University and beyond
- ✦ Capacity to take on new projects
- ✦ Ability to tackle new tasks
- ✦ Flexibility in the system
- ✦ External consultants able to fill gaps

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Open communication within the team and without is essential to create good working relationships, teamwork and collaboration, and effective problem solving.
- ✓ Leadership and vision is critical to generate respect, support and development.
- ✓ Strategic management enables the team to embrace change and create non-traditional forward thinking teams that reach across old boundaries.
- ✓ Finding, motivating and retaining talent: having a low turnover, stable team that can therefore cope better with external change.
- ✓ Raising the bar – throwing people in at the deep end and pushing them outside their comfort zone helps them to develop new competencies, become multi-skilled and used to a shifting environment.

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