

If I could turn back the clock, I would...

Organizations that are on the forefront of adopting an evidence-based practice (EBP) often do not have the benefit of drawing on lessons learned from other adopters and implementers of the practice. This lack of guidance often leads to inefficient, cumbersome adoption and implementation processes. To complicate this problem, early adopters usually do not have an appropriate forum in which to share experiences with the researchers who created the EBP and with future adopters of the innovation. Findings from the Innovation Diffusion and Adoption Research Project (IDARP) can help address this feedback issue. At the conclusion of the study, IDARP participants were asked the following question: "If you could turn back the clock, what would you do differently based on your experience on this project?"

PARTICIPANTS

Seventy-two informants associated with 42 projects from 36 organizations provided 156 comments about issues that they would like to have changed during the adoption and implementation processes. Each of the organizations implemented the EBP over three contact periods from 2001 to the end of data collection effort in 2005 and implemented at least one of the following EBPs: 6 (14%) Multi-systemic Therapy (MST), 24 (57%) Integrated Dual Diagnosis Treatment (IDDT), 3 (7%) the Ohio Medication Algorithm Project (OMAP), and 9 (21%) Cluster-based Planning (CBP). Informants by role and EBP are depicted in the following table:

	CBP	IDDT	MST	OMAP
Top Executive	35%	45%	0%	20%
Management	25%	50%	25%	0%
Line Staff	10%	65%	20%	5%
Total by EBP	24%	53%	16%	7%

KEY ISSUES

Had participants the chance to turn back the clock, they would address issues in multiple areas. The following table displays the five emergent themes by EBP:

	CBP	IDDT	MST	OMAP	Total
Staff	33%	50%	10%	7%	38%
EBP	27%	49%	22%	2%	33%
System	0%	35%	65%	0%	11%
CCOE	0%	13%	60%	27%	10%
Financial	23%	38%	31%	8%	8%
Total by EBP	24%	44%	26%	6%	

STAFF ISSUES: MANAGEMENT & TRAINING

With regard to what they would have done differently, informants would address staff issues. This theme represented 60 (38%) of the total comments, and it can be broken down into two categories: management issues and training issues. Respondents from three out of four types of EBPs included in IDARP believed that the organization should have had more staff development and supervision throughout the implementation process. Participants regretted that staff hadn't engaged in more EBP-appropriate development activities. They suggested that the organization should hold regular mentoring meetings to help staff deal with problems that may arise when implementing the EBP. Participants also stated that organizations should designate full-time staff to the EBP implementation process. According to informants, staff split their time between the EBP duties and other job duties, thus causing staff to experience difficulties when performing regular job duties, general stress, and an inability to move the EBP forward quickly.

Informants also underscored the importance of training. Respondents indicated most staff learned quite a bit from initial trainings; however, they advocated that the initial training session be lengthened. In addition, staff also recommended more ongoing training because they felt frequent turnover created EBP knowledge gaps, especially when supervisors left the organization.

EBP ISSUES: ROLLOUT & IMPLEMENTATION

Respondents cited EBP issues as the second most important theme with 51 (33%) comments contributing to categories that deal with issues regarding the EBP rollout and implementation. Typically, participants wanted the EBP to be rolled out more quickly within the organization. Many noted that the EBP development process dragged on, contributing to a sense that the EBP was not important to the organization. For innovations that have staged implementation like IDDT, participants suggested that organizations implement more than one component at the same time or decrease the length of time in between component implementation.

Upon reflection, participants also wished they could change some factors associated with the implementation process. Some expressed regret that they hadn't confronted problems with EBP adherence early on. Managers and team supervisors often found that problems with fidelity contributed to an inefficient implementation process. For example, some agencies didn't choose the most appropriate clients for the EBP early in the implementation process, which led to both a lack of success and a lack of motivation among staff members.

SYSTEM ISSUES: ENGAGEMENT FOR SUPPORT

Seventeen (11%) mentions fell into this theme. Participants from IDDT and MST recognized the need for community support throughout the adoption decision and implementation processes. Several expressed regret that they had not laid the groundwork for community support once they encountered tension or hostility from external groups. Most respondents wished they had actively engaged all community stakeholders when they were considering the EBP, including those that would be directly and indirectly involved in the EBP.

CCOE ISSUES: TECHNICAL SUPPORT

This theme represented 15 (10%) comments from participating organizations. In general, informants reported very positive views of the Coordinating Centers of Excellence (CCOEs), and most regretted that they had waited so long to

contact the CCOEs. Whether comments came from top managers or front-line staff, they felt that the adoption and implementation processes would have gone more smoothly had the CCOE been involved from the beginning. Staff also emphasized the importance of an ongoing relationship with the CCOE to assist in the training of new employees and monitoring of fidelity.

FINANCIAL ISSUES: RESOURCE ACQUISITION

Finally, participants provided 13 (8%) comments about financial issues. Many of these comments dealt with resource acquisition; informants felt they should have secured more money for EBP rollout and long-term implementation, ensuring a sustainable practice.

CONCLUSIONS

Drawing on these "lessons learned," organizations may discover ways to avoid some of the common pitfalls experienced by EBP adopters thereby ensuring a smoother, more efficient adoption and implementation process. Participants indicated that organizational leadership has a large part to play in this process, and that leaders can target the aforementioned domains to greatly assist the organization during the pre- and post-implementation process. Prior to implementation, leadership should work with EBP sponsors to engage stakeholders for both tacit and explicit support. Key to this process will be the acquisition of the financial resources to support the initial and ongoing implementation of the EBP. Leadership should make sure that CCOEs play a key role by providing advice on soliciting external groups for support, giving recommendations about EBP rollout, and providing ongoing training opportunities. Finally, leadership can address staff issues, making sure that staff have the supervision and training they need throughout the EBP implementation.

For more information:

IDARP Bulletins are issued periodically to report specific research findings that may be of interest to policy makers, practitioners, consumers, etc. For more information about this Bulletin, contact Rick Massatti at MassattiR@mh.state.oh.us. For other project inquiries, please contact Helen Anne Sweeney, IDARP Project Manager (SweeneyH@mh.state.oh.us). (Rev-2/07)