

# APPLYING THE DIFFUSION OF INNOVATIONS MODEL TO ACTIVE LIVING INNOVATIONS

Everett M. Rogers

University of New Mexico



# WHAT IS RESEARCH UTILIZATION?

- The process through which research findings are put into use in the form of programs and/or policies.
- Should be conceptualized ideally as a two-way, back-and-forth relationship linking researchers and practitioners.



# DIFFUSION

- Diffusion is the process in which an **INNOVATION** is **COMMUNICATED** through certain **CHANNELS** over **TIME** among the members of a **SOCIAL SYSTEM**. Diffusion is a social process of individuals talking to peers.
- The environment of the system is crucial.



# AN INNOVATION

- An innovation is an idea that is perceived as new by an individual, organization, or other unit of adoption.
- Perceptions count (the W.I. Thomas dictum).



# PERCEIVED CHARACTERISTICS OF INNOVATIONS

- Relative advantage (+)
- Compatability (+)
- Complexity (-)
- Trialability (+)
- Observability (+)



# ADOPTER CATEGORIES

- Adopter categories are classifications of individuals on the basis of their innovativeness (relative time of adoption).
- Innovators are not perceived as appropriate role models.
- Opinion leadership is concentrated among early adopters, not innovators.



# INTERDISCIPLINARY/ MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

- Many real life problems do not match with a single discipline.
- Much university-based research is conducted by research centers, outside of university departments.
- At the University of New Mexico, 85% of funded research is conducted by 55 research centers, not the 51 departments.



# “BAD” INNOVATIONS CAN DIFFUSE: THE CASE OF DARE

- National survey of 1,905 middle schools (Ringwalt et al., 2002).
- 54% adopted DARE (a program found to be ineffective).
- 27% adopted a drug abuse prevention program of proven effectiveness.





# CLINICAL TRIALS NETWORK

- 17 university-based research centers
- Each with about 5 practitioner programs
- NIDA: \$100 million per year
- “Dancing with Strangers”?
- Utilization of this research can be facilitated by CTPs (programs), especially if they are opinion leaders for other programs



# PRACTICE GUIDELINES

- Hundreds of guidelines exist in every field
- Each guideline has only modest impact, due to information overload
- Possible to combine guidelines with workshops, demonstrations, etc. in order to achieve more utilization
- Conclusion: Don't depend solely on guidelines to achieve utilization.



# SYNTHESES OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

- Syntheses provide a “thicker reed” for practitioners (something like practice guidelines)
- Example: CDC’s National Center for Injury Prevention and Control made syntheses
- Sobriety checkpoints, lower blood alcohol concentration limits, child safety seats
- Need follow-on activities to maximize utilization through syntheses.



# Jonathan Lomas et al (1991) Study

- Practice guidelines for vaginal birth delivery (vs. Cesarean delivery)
- Opinion leaders among 76 MDs in 16 hospitals
- Two years: 85% increase in adoption of vaginal birth delivery
- Several other experiments with opinion leaders: Similar results (Rogers, 2003).



# RE-INVENTION

- The degree to which an innovation (a research finding) is changed or modified in the process of its adoption and implementation
- A certain degree of re-invention encourages more widespread adoption/utilization
- Too much re-invention reduces impacts of the innovation through lessened fidelity



# CHAMPIONS

- Charismatic individuals who throw their weight behind an innovation, thus overcoming indifference or resistance to it in the system
- Early research showed champions were powerful, of high status
- Recent research shows they are negotiators, in key network locations in a system



# COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

- Example: Health researchers at the University of Washington (Sullivan et al., 2001)
- More community participation in the research led to more research utilization. Why? because it was a two-way process and the research was culturally appropriate



# CONCLUSIONS

- Research utilization is difficult, but entirely possible.
- Conceptualize RU as a two-way, concurrent process with research, not RU as a post hoc activity after the research is completed.

