

Research & Implementation: a joint (ad)venture

National coordination to improve the lives of persons with visual impairments: do's and don'ts from 4 perspectives

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Symposium Abstract

Research is an essential ingredient to improve quality of life of persons with visual impairments. But how are research results transferred and implemented into practice? This is the focus of the present symposium; knowledge transfer. How can we facilitate and improve the implementation of all kinds of research results result into rehabilitation and education practice? What lessons can be learned via an international comparison of possible best practices in other countries and networks?

In this symposium, perspectives and examples of connecting research and practice will be presented from several countries and networks. The phase of implementation will be highlighted, because a prerequisite for real change is that an individual knows about the recent knowledge and is able to use these insights. Speakers from three different countries will share examples and experiences: United Kingdom (RNIB), Spain (ONCE) and the Netherlands (InZicht, the organizer of this symposium). Furthermore, ENVITER (European Network for Vision Impairment Training Education & Research) will present their experiences. Afterwards there will be time for discussion in a panel and with the audience.

In the Netherlands three rehabilitation centers (Royal Dutch Visio, Bartiméus and Robert Coppes Foundation) and the Netherlands Organization for Health Research and Development work together in the InZicht program. In the last 18 years InZicht has funded many different research projects with the financial aid of the support foundations of Bartiméus and Royal Dutch Visio. Various activities, such as newsletters, sight visits, annual meeting-days, implementation workshops, and implementation projects are organized by InZicht to stimulate and facilitate implementation.

The goal of the symposium is to share knowledge on the do's and don'ts, create new ideas for each of the attendees of this symposium, and to strive for international research coordination in the future.

At the end of the symposium we will organize a panel discussion, together with persons with visual impairments from the Eye Association Netherlands (Oogvereniging), the European Blind Union and/or World Blind Union.

Four presentations:

1. Dutch perspective: Inesz van Benten, InZicht/ZonMw
2. United Kingdom perspective: Philippa Simkiss, RNIB
3. Spanish perspective: Víctor López Eiris, ONCE
4. European perspective: Bláithín Gallagher, ENVITER

1. Do's and don'ts of implementing research knowledge into practice in the Netherlands

*Inesz van Benten, Els van Gessele
ZonMw, The Hague, The Netherlands*

In the Netherlands both fundamental and applied scientific research concerning visual impairments is performed. Applied scientific research focusses on rehabilitation, care, employment and education of people with a visual impairment. For a proper implementation of results from research it is necessary to closely collaborate between research and practice. Therefore three rehabilitation centers (Royal Dutch Visio, Bartiméus and Robert Coppes Foundation) and the Netherlands Organization for Health Research and Development (ZonMw) work together to bridge the gap between applied scientific research and practice. To do this the InZicht research program was founded and the rehabilitation centers have developed a policy of knowledge transfer and learning within their organisations.

In this presentation we will focus on implementing knowledge into practice. We will share what implementation strategies are used in the Netherlands and how different target groups are involved. And we will present some tools for implementation, good practices and pitfalls. For example, last year we have gained experience in disseminating knowledge to health care professionals via serious gaming and smartphone apps. And special attention is paid to embedding innovations into patient registrations in rehabilitation centers, for example the Dutch ICF based Participation and Activity Inventory (PAI). Furthermore we will discuss the role of client organizations in each phase of the research and implementation process. In the discussion we hope to get feedback to improve our way of working.

2. Research and implementation - the UK (ad)venture

Philippa Simkiss

RNIB is a leading sight loss charity or NGO in the UK. RNIB research links closely with service delivery colleagues within RNIB and those working in other organisations. Examples such as these given below will be used to demonstrate interaction between research and practice.

RNIB's digital sight loss data tool was developed to support local activists influence the services available to visually impaired people. A training programme was delivered to equip a range of practitioners to access the tool, understand the range of data it contains and apply it in contract negotiations with funders and local campaigning. Challenges were experienced in upskilling some practitioners in the use of evidence from data models rather than administrative data. This was overcome through peer discussion in workshops.

RNIB developed Ten Principles of good practice in vision rehabilitation by reviewing literature and research evidence, gathering feedback from service users and a range of practitioners. Additional resource was allocated to gain support from the wide range of organisations engaged in supporting visually impaired people prior to publication. Visually impaired people were equipped as spokespeople to promote the Ten Principles to their local councils who fund vision rehabilitation. Major challenges remain as we seek to persuade these funders of the importance of vision rehabilitation.

The role of visually impaired people is central. We established customer panels, small numbers of people with personal experience of sight loss, who are strategically engaged and steer our work. They volunteer to work on a particular theme. These include older people with sight loss, people managing diabetes and working age people with sight loss. Panel members help plan research and development programmes, co-produce tools, prioritise

results and present findings. Resource must be allocated to ensure these panels are managed and members are valued for the contribution they can give.

3. Research at ONCE: work plan and best practices

Víctor López Eiris

Gathering information in the field of visual impairment is essential to increase the ability to solve new problems, adapting it to the changing profile of affected people and social and technological changes. Research is also a mean to improve quality of life of people with severe visual problems.

In this context the Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles (ONCE) is implementing policies to stimulate and support initiatives to achieve these objectives and enhance quality of services for the personal independence and social integration of its members.

In recent years ONCE has focused its work on the following research lines:

- Social, medical and technological innovation projects in cooperation with universities and public and private institutions.
- Internal studies:
 - o To improve accessibility of mobile devices and applications as well as platforms and software in partnership with several companies and foundations.
 - o To promote innovation among professionals by rewarding outstanding initiatives.

This paper will show the development of these actions and their progress in the near future. Undoubtedly, these are indispensable tools for the optimization of procedures and direct intervention techniques for independent living and mobility, production of learning and teaching materials, etc.

Best research practices imply responsibility and rigor taking into account the interests of concerned people and ensuring that results are carried out in practice. To this end ONCE invests efforts to evaluate and monitor all projects in which it is collaborating by encouraging mechanisms for the continuous updating of knowledge of professionals through specialized publications and the maintenance of its technical library.

4. ENVITER – a European network useful to all.

Dr Bláithín Gallagher on behalf of the ENVITER network.

This presentation will give some background about ENVITER (European Network for Vision Impairment Training Education & Research) which comprises a variety of specialist organisations from across Europe, all tasked with serving the needs of people with vision loss and each staffed by professionals from many different disciplines in the field, all with the goal of enhancing and improving the lives of the people they serve.

Since its inception ENVITER has been involved in EU funded projects. You will hear about the number and types of projects that ENVITER has been involved with, the plans for the ENVITER academy; and information about an annual conference. The presentation will demonstrate how ENVITER projects try to fit within the "TER" of its name, i.e. Training, Education and Research.

The benefits to the population and to people with vision impairment throughout Europe from the work of ENVITER and her members, and the sharing of information and expertise both within ENVITER but also with other organisations/networks internationally, currently and in the future, will be discussed. A desire to prevent the ongoing reinvention of the wheel and a willingness to enter into reciprocal sharing agreements with other networks to advance the education of and knowledge about issues in relation to vision science/vision impairment across a variety of topics will be demonstrated. All of these activities have the ultimate aim of achieving the goal of ENVITER in relation to improving and enhancing the lives of people with vision loss. In particular, we can explore how research groups may access a population of professionals and service users (with a mixture of culture, language, etc.) to serve as participants in research and projects whose aims are in line with the mission statement of ENVITER and also to access the network of ENVITER as a major dissemination tool.