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Knowledge transfer - Collaboration between academics and clinical specialists in producing national practice guidelines for lower limb amputees

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Introduction

Most specialist clinicians are thought to be equipped with research skills. In reality, this is not always the case. Within occupational therapy there is a noticeable absence of high quality research and of clinicians to critique research to be included in high profile documents. In the United Kingdom the government has invited universities to collaborate with businesses including hospitals and social care organisations to transfer knowledge into practice.

Objectives

To equip a group of expert clinicians with the skills and confidence to critically appraise qualitative and quantitative research papers in order to produce evidence based national guidelines with lower limb amputees.

Description

The Lower Limb Amputee Practice Guidelines Development Group was established in 2006 by the College of Occupational Therapists Specialist Section - Trauma and Orthopaedics, with a remit of producing national guidelines for occupational therapists working with lower limb amputees. The group consists of therapists with specialist and expert clinical skills, but with varying levels of critical appraisal and research skills.

Discussion

This paper will discuss the trials and tribulations of the knowledge transfer process. It will critique the process, the role of the academics and of the national body and clinicians by using evidence from personal reflections. More importantly, it will present the national guidelines for lower limb amputees and whether knowledge transfer did equip clinicians with the skills to become independent researchers.

Conclusion

Knowledge transfer is an innovative approach which enables clinicians to acquire the confidence to produce evidence based guidelines by creating a culture of less dependency upon academics.

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy

Knowledge transfer bridges the theory / practice gap by allowing academics to mentor clinicians in order to equip them with new research skills. The work completed by this group is of national and international importance. No such evidence-based guidelines existed, and it is expected that occupational therapists, students and other health care professionals will use the developed guidelines. More importantly, the scheme has equipped expert clinicians with the skills to complete and lead on future research and contribute further to the evidence base of the profession.