Supplemental material

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Supplemental File 1.

Exemplar project – Involving knowledge users (KUs) in rapid reviews[51]

The Strategy for Patient Oriented Research (SPOR) Evidence Alliance, in collaboration with the COVID-19 Evidence Network to support Decision-making (COVID-END) recognised the need for the patient and public involvement in COVID-19 rapid reviews (RRs) and in 2020, quickly mobilised to provide meaningful engagement opportunities for patients (referred to as citizen members for COVID-END) in the production of RRs. This initiative brought together a group of willing Canadians, most of whom had never been engaged in evidence synthesis products and some who were engaging as public partners for the first time.

The main challenges of this knowledge user involvement are:

(1) Tight timelines that are difficult for both the researchers and their KU partners, as time to develop the partnerships is limited and the window of opportunity to provide feedback is tight;

(2) RRs where involvement at the initial stage is limited because the commissioner has prescribed a specific question, which did not provide space for suggested modifications; and

(3) Little time for training of both the research team and the partners.

It is of vital importance to be transparent about the challenges and to allow the KU partners to make their own decisions about whether they are willing to work under these conditions as well as offer solutions to the challenges when possible.

Key enablers have been:

(1) A SPOR Evidence Alliance 10-hour training program to prepare 24 patient and public partners to meaningfully engage with Canadian researchers conducting RRs by providing basic knowledge of evidence synthesis and, specifically, RRs as well as addressing the unique challenges of patient and public involvement in the production of rapid evidence during the COVID-19 pandemic (note: all patient and public partners who took the course have been engaged across 18 projects since June 2021);

(2) Available resources for RR teams (e.g., a patient/public partner request form, webinars highlighting RR engagement, appreciation policy co-developed by patient and public partners);

(3) Contact people from the SPOR Evidence Alliance and COVID-END collaborating with researchers to "match" patient/public partners and follow up on lessons learned; and

(4) Sharing best practices through webinars and workshops.

Further information is available at:

https://sporevidencealliance.ca/resources/webinars/

https://sporevidencealliance.ca/resources/for-researchers/

A list of completed projects is available at:

https://sporevidencealliance.ca/key-activities/covid-19-evidence-synthesis/

* Noted that patient/public partner names are listed for each RR