

Lion Fellowship Int Final

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Hello, my name is Leon sharp and I'm a professor of health psychology and co director of the UCLA tobacco and alcohol Research Group and I work in the department of behavioural science and telehealth. And for the last two decades, my research has primarily focused on tobacco control and more generally addiction research, as well as behavioural science. My main motivation need to be involved with a fellowship is to understand better about what follows after you've undertaken research. And the problem that a lot of researchers have, as I think is that there exists in this isolation, they design studies, and they publish the results of these studies. And then they let it free into the world. And I've noticed that not only my field, but in general, I think researchers often aren't as adept at communicating the information in such a way that they reach the right stakeholders for work to be implemented. So you finish in a randomised control trial, it's published and then forgotten about. And so the key thing from evilness, we need to learn a bit more about these kinds of pathways to impact that exist to translate research into actual outcomes, for instance, implementation and policy. So the project I proposed was very much related to an ongoing funded, randomised control trial that I'm currently undertaking. That trial essentially is trying to evaluate whether or not the addition of E cigarettes to standard treatment is effective in helping people who have mental health problems or being treated for mental illness in the community to help them stop smoking. And the reason behind that is that there's a large health disparities between those who live with mental illness, they find it more difficult to stop smoking. And so this is a pragmatic trial. And the reason for me to apply to the impact fellowship is that I know that even if he finds an effect, it's not entirely clear how that would then be implemented, how it would change, actual practice, save it in the National Health Service. And so I was trying to work out how best to come up with a kind of pathway after conclusion of the study, to disseminate the key benefits and findings, but also build up a new contacts to try to influence stakeholders. So the idea behind the project was to have a stakeholder working group, to discuss the findings and to involve people across a wide range of backgrounds that might be important in enabling us to implement this intervention in actual practice. So this could be those who essentially communicate this and might be meet people who work in the media, but also politicians who may have to lobby for it, as well as general interest groups, for instance, action, smoking and health, but also clinicians who would actually be implementing it. And so the idea was really to come up with a successful implementation strategy to develop that the longer term aim to adopt the intervention as a standard clinical practice. And so the main output I was hoping to produce was a toolkit, really, for researchers in this field to work within the NHS, to have a pathway that leads to impact later on. So the problem with that approach was, of course, it was predicated upon the trial, working as expected rather, it's being conducted to the timelines we

had hoped, but because of for various reasons, including COVID, which delayed the onset of the trial and the problems we had with recruiting participants into the trial. In fact, this study was delayed quite a bit, and we only just finished the pilot part of it and have gone back to the funder with the results, we didn't manage to recruit the required sample size. So that makes the makes the focus on this particular trial somewhat more problematic, however, they did raise my awareness of was the fact of course, we had all these problems. And so whether this can be another outcome that we have interest to demonstrate impact. So we are now in collaboration with my colleague Sharon Cox's also on the impact fellowship, we tried to look at some of the similarities with both observed for two trials. Hers is called the sketch trial. Ours is called the escape trial, which essentially are smoking cessation trials that involve e cigarettes. And we are hoping to run a workshop to address translation issues and smoking cessation research. So it's going to be moving away a bit more from our specific trial. to more general toolkit trying to develop a general toolkit to support effective practice and tobacco control. So one of the main focuses on this in this will be, for instance, what are the kinds of problems we encountered in trying to run this trial? And how can they be overcome. And obviously, the first thing is, we have to address the problem of biotin from the NHS. So we will be involving several key stakeholder groups from the NHS, we are going to involve research leads that were involved in both our trials. So somebody who's working with me, from Sheffield, and then there's somebody who's working with Sharon, also as a contact for the NHS, we will also involve a well known consultant and respiratory medicine, who is leading the tobacco control implementation plan for the NHS as a whole to give a broader overview, and get insights and broader insight into the NHS long term plan, among other things. So that's the first for people who are working within the NHS and know how to implement research and have an overview of the long term plans that are likely to be implemented in the area of tobacco control. Then the second group are researchers, those are the trial managers that are involved in our trials, who were at the coalface of trying to get this trial to run appropriately. And will also involve researchers who weren't involved in any of our trials, but have successfully delivered strides within the NHS in the area of smoking cessation elsewhere, particularly from Queen Mary University London. So we have the contrasting views then from people who have worked in a trial that has faced difficulties versus those who have managed to overcome them. And then we also interested in involving people who on on the policy side, so this is a bit more removed from the idea of how to run this try successfully. But also, again, to have a look at the you know, longer term goals of these projects, ie to have an impact on policy. And so we will be involving several colleagues of ours who work in the field of tobacco control. One is the deputy chief executive of the action of action, smoking health ash, which is a charity that is doing work in this area, as well as somebody's the Tobacco Control programme lead from the Office of Health Improvement disparities, all hit hope I got that right. Oh. And we'll also hoping on the policy side to love somebody who is currently working as part of one of the two main parties in the UK, on on health briefs to get an insight from a politician. And we'll also, so this is a third group policymakers and those who are involved in forming these decisions, then we also want to involve people who are actually paying for this. So we're looking to involve commissioners, from north and south of England. And lastly, so let's just because it's important to find out something about what kind of outcomes that would need to see in order to help implement any given dimension, because they hold the purse strings. And then lastly, when it comes to the dissemination of information, obviously, we have to work with the media. And so we'll go in to be involving somebody as well in this working group who is a one of the leaders in the science media centre, which is based at the Wellcome Trust, who has lots of lots of experience in dealing, particularly in the area of tobacco control, communicating research findings to the wider public. It's interesting when it comes to how to how to define impact, and it's actually much broader than one things. So the surprise for me, for instance, is to realise that I guess one could construe impact as something that leads, for instance, the built up of a network of

people that we can approach for future studies going forward. So it's not quite as tightly defined as I thought. And so being on the programme made me aware that, you know, impact is a broad field. And that can be defined in many different ways. But I think some of the words were useful, for instance, to get a bit of an insight into how to communicate with decision makers.



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So we had a talk by somebody who has worked very closely with the past former Labour government, and to realise that there can often be a disconnect when it comes to achieving particular goals. So researchers, as a whole aware of maybe over complicating things and trying to explain results or the caveat everything when in fact, if you want to have a particular outcome out of a meeting, you may have to simplify things in order to persuade somebody that something is worse than doing investing. And so I found this kind of the kind of practical approach. Very useful to learn more about how to engage these kinds of key stakeholders that have List, which is something that you do not learn as a researcher as such, it's an external skill we have to pick up on, you know, preservation skills, communication skills, all that sort. One thing is, of course, you want to produce something at the end of that workshop when it when it happens. And so we're hoping that we'll be able to put up the results of it as well online on our programmes or research teams website for others to access. So it's open access to everybody else. And I guess one of the other things you might do is see, once it has been produced in may ask for other researchers and other other stakeholders, in fact, to provide feedback on this, those who are indirectly involved, and to keep it as a living document. And so that it can be adapted for others to put to provide feedback into it and change it going forward. The other thing, I think that it might, depending on what we actually produce, how it will actually impact my own research practices, that some of the things that are likely likely to arise from it may in fact, influence how I approach future research projects, right from the point of inception of the research project, and writing of the grant application to take into consideration some of the insights I may have not had beforehand. So as I said, at the very beginning, I think it's that researchers tend to be very focused on providing an internally sound research proposal that has some kind of external validity, and possibly can be implemented later on in practice. But I think that might be a bit too narrow, especially when it comes to impact to basically built the idea of impact into the conception of any research right from the get go, I think that is what I'm going to hopefully take away from it. In general, it's important to realise that you know, your work that can't exist in a silo, we all get siloed. And there's problems even between different groups of researchers on Android communicate with one another. And one of the things I've learned through being impact fellow is that you really have to be able to step back properly, to try to think of yourself as not a researcher when it comes to communicate information and when it comes to persuading others to, to buy into what you're trying to find what you're trying to show. And I think as a researcher, I probably thought initially, well, here's an observation that shows us something significant. That's all I should do. That's the most important thing when in fact, that's only the beginning of trying to do successful research.