

ABSTRACT

There is a huge amount of knowledge about how to do research but there is often a gap in applying this in real world research environments. It is often challenging to recruit a large enough sample size and populations that are hard to study such as children. One solution is to use secondary sources of data. Despite their availability, rehabilitation researchers are rare data users. Procedures for accessing the micro-level data, lack of information on relevant content, and lack of knowledge of the statistical methods needed to deal with the data structure clearly are barriers to use of health information by rehabilitation researchers and others from other disciplines as few are using these data. Together, these create a knowledge gap. This project is intended to address the identified knowledge gap by illustrating practical solutions to the barriers to use of existing health information data for research in rehabilitation.

This study addresses the following research questions: Can rehabilitation researchers effectively use existing micro-level health information to answer questions relevant to the practice and outcomes of rehabilitation? What structures and processes need to be put into place to facilitate use of these valuable research resources? Can an MSc student acquire, in the time frame of a two year thesis program, the skills to use these existing resources to answer a single question which would be suitable for an MSc Thesis?

Using Graham's Knowledge-to-Action (KTA) process, the student goes through this journey of accessing survey data from Statistics Canada to answer her own research question. She identifies the real and perceived barriers to the use of available databases. A search of existing data sources in Canada related to children is conducted from Statistics Canada, the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) and the *Centre inter-universitaire québécois de statistiques sociales (CIQSS)*. Examples of research questions which could be answered using existing Canadian health information databases are generated from clinicians, researchers and other students. Finally, a tool-kit for Rehabilitation Science graduate students who wish to work with available data bases is created to address this knowledge gap and to facilitate access to available sources of data. Ultimately, content for a webpage for the School of Physical and Occupational Therapy website of McGill University will be generated with the gathered information.