Editors’ welcome to Implementation Research and Practice

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Abstract
This editorial introduces the new, online-only, open-access, international journal, Implementation Research and Practice (IRP), jointly published by SAGE and the Society for Implementation Research Collaboration (SIRC). IRP provides rapid publication of interdisciplinary research that advances the implementation in diverse contexts of effective approaches to assess, prevent, and treat mental health, substance use, or other addictive behaviors, in the general population or among those at risk or suffering from these disorders. IRP welcomes a variety of paper types designed to publish empirical, methodological, conceptual, and practical advances, as well as syntheses and perspectives intended to inspire new directions for future research. Consistent with the title of the journal, IRP welcomes manuscripts that stimulate, curate, and align research, policy, and practice.

Keywords
implementation science, dissemination, mental health, substance use, addictive behaviors, intervention, prevention

Welcome to Implementation Research and Practice (IRP)! IRP has a two-pronged mission. The first aim is to advance science that will accelerate the implementation of effective approaches in diverse contexts to assess, prevent, and treat mental health disorders, substance use disorders (and other addictive behavior), and their co-occurrence. This includes accelerating the implementation of effective approaches in the general population and among those at risk of or suffering from these disorders. The second aim is to make information about these advancements rapidly available online to stakeholders around the globe. The timeliness of the journal’s launch is underscored by World Health Organization (2013) estimates of the increasing burden of mental health conditions over time and as a significant proportion of health burden, and the ascendance of mental health problems relative to physical illness as causes of child and adolescent disability and pediatric health care visits (McMillan et al., 2018).

Although this journal is new, the topic of implementation is not. The study of implementation of innovations has gone on for well over a century, under the guise of diverse disciplines and nomenclatures (Rogers, 1983). In the 1980s, for example, the U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) identified the fields of knowledge translation and technology transfer as critical to speeding the adoption and implementation of effective methods to slow, if not altogether prevent, the then-rapid spread of HIV, as well as to prevent and treat substance abuse and other addictions (Brown, 1995). Some psychotherapy researchers argued similarly with respect to effective mental health treatments, concluding on the basis of technology transfer reviews that their adoption and sustained implementation would require changes in behavior at the individual, organizational, community, and system levels (Backer et al., 1986).

In 1993, a NIDA-sponsored convening of policy, scholarly, and practice experts concluded that “a significant behavioral science knowledge base has developed about..."
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1999) catalyzed implementation research in health care and menting technology transfer, and revisit what does and does not work in "these more complex and resource-poor times" (Backer et al., 1995, p. 5).

Subsequently, the need for “evidence-based implementa-
tion of evidence-based medicine” (Grol & Grimshaw, 1999) catalyzed implementation research in health care and health services. As the current century dawned, “implement-

ation science” began to develop as a specialized field of inquiry, and the first journal dedicated to implementation science was established in 2006. Since then, conceptual frameworks have proliferated; innovative research designs, methodologies, and measurement methods have been proposed; implementation research training forums have been mounted; and the field’s first dedicated journal has nurtured the quality and quantity of research on implementation strategies in health care (Eccles et al., 2012).

The Society for Implementation Research Collaboration

The Society for Implementation Research Collaboration (SIRC) grew out of the Seattle Implementation Research Conference, a three-conference series funded by the U.S. National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) from 2010 to 2015 to foster communication and collaboration across the diverse groups of stakeholders whose efforts to improve access, quality, and outcomes of mental health care often occurred in parallel rather than collaborative ways. These stakeholders included health and mental health treatment, services, and implementation researchers; leaders, managers, and practitioners of service and intermediary organizations; policy makers; and graduate and undergraduate students. As an independent, nonprofit, professional organization, SIRC is committed to ensuring the meaning-

ful participation of these stakeholders in advancing the science and practice of implementation.

In 2014, a Planning Committee began to examine the need for and utility of a journal that would focus on implementa-
tion of the broad range of assessment, prevention, and inter-
vention approaches relevant to mental health and substance use, and the diversity of community-based settings relevant to that focus. Under the leadership of successive SIRC presi-
dents and with support from the Board of Directors, the work culminated in the establishment of a publishing partnership between SIRC and SAGE Publishing. It is our honor and pleasure to serve as inaugural Editors-in-Chief of IRP and to work alongside an esteemed international group of inaugural Associate Editors.

Scope

IRP is an outlet for research that aims to deliver on the promise of implementation science to improve the lives of individuals with or at risk of mental health, substance use and other addictive behaviors. IRP is an international, peer-reviewed, open-access, online-only journal providing rapid publication of interdisciplinary research that advances the implementation of effective approaches to assess, prevent, and treat major sources of human suffering. Consistent with the ways in which the risk of or experience with mental health, substance use, and other addictive behaviors is far-reaching, so is the scope of IRP. It is a forum for the publication of research that spans disciplines including but not limited to the following: psychological science, sociology, anthropology, behavioral economics, man-

agement science and organizational research, adult learning, cognitive and decision science, informatics, engineering, and communication. Health care and health services research, mental health services research, and substance abuse services research have in common a focus on structural aspects, processes, and outcomes of care and are relevant to and ripe for investigations into the implementation of effective prevention and intervention.

There is great diversity within and across nations of the community settings in which human development unfolds, in which work, schooling, and play or leisure transpire. Accordingly, there is potentially great diversity of community contexts in which implementation will need to occur for effective approaches to support adaptive human develop-

ment and mental health, and to identify, prevent, and treat mental health problems, substance abuse, and other addictions. There is also diversity in the nature and mandates of service sectors and systems in which assessment, prevention, and treatment approaches are implemented, and of the organizations, groups, and individuals doing the implementing. The goals of this journal are to advance implementation research and practice in ways that have a demonstrable impact in the context of such diversity.

The journal welcomes a wide range of research includ-
ing the following:

- Development and testing of strategies to advance the implementation, sustainment, and scale-out of effective prevention and treatment approaches, and to decrease the use of approaches that are untested and ineffective (i.e., de-implementation);
- Evaluation of the impact of innovative design, content, or delivery methods intended to optimize effective prevention and treatment approaches;
• Evaluation of the effectiveness of novel assessment, preventive, or treatment approaches that includes a robust evaluation of their implementation;
• Development and evaluation of research methods to advance implementation science, such as innovative research design, measurement, analytic, and data and knowledge synthesis methods;
• Research on the dissemination of information about effective approaches to the detection, prevention, and treatment of mental health, substance use, and other addictive behaviors, and of information regarding effective methods to promote their adoption and implementation;
• Systematic reviews in the field of implementation synthesizing the evidence for frameworks, measures, strategies, and outcomes, for instance.

Outside of the journal’s scope is:

• Research exclusively focused on health promotion or health behaviors in the general population without consideration of impact on mental health, substance use, or addiction;
• Research exclusively focused on the interventions for mental health, substance use, or addiction (development, efficacy, effectiveness) with no evaluation of implementation processes or outcomes.

IRP welcomes a variety of paper types designed to publish empirical, methodological, conceptual, and practical advances, as well as syntheses and perspectives intended to inspire new directions for future research. Consistent with the title of the journal (i.e., Implementation Research and Practice) its contents are expected to stimulate, curate, and align research, policy, and practice. The article types welcomed offer opportunities to marry implementation in practice with methods to create generalizable knowledge (scientific advancement), as well as to design and test new implementation approaches and scientific methods for practice. IRP is expected to be a resource for the diverse stakeholders committed to discovering and ensuring the effective implementation of effective prevention and treatment approaches. Accordingly, IRP requires a lay summary for all manuscripts. This requirement is designed to ensure readers understand what a manuscript contributes to that which is already known about a topic and its implications for practice, policy, or research.

**Online-only, open-access**

The decision to pursue an online-only, open-access forum for publication of IRP was informed by a commitment to ensuring rapid access of information to all audiences, regardless of their access to university or institutional libraries, virtual or brick-and-mortar. The publishing partnership with SAGE ensures individuals and organizations in Research4Life countries are able to publish their work in this journal. We are aware, however, a potential trade-off of aiming for swift and nearly universal access to information is that individuals in some contexts and career stages may have difficulty paying the article processing fees. We are pleased our publishing partner will waive these fees for articles accepted for publication in the first year and to offer SIRC members a 40% discount thereafter. We also adopted a double-blinded manuscript review process primarily to ensure objectivity of review and protect reviewers from withholding criticism due to inevitable power differentials. We understand that, in the context of movement toward open science, this may limit transparency and accountability for reviewers, but we believe that the benefits of blinding continue to outweigh the potential negative consequences.

**Envisioning our future**

We acknowledge the tremendous responsibility our journal holds for ensuring that ethical, high-quality research and practical implementation efforts are rapidly made available to the science and practice communities who may benefit from new knowledge, methods, and ideas. We envision a future in which the science and practice of implementation inspire and teach one another, and in which stakeholders worldwide co-create research, practices, and policies in the service of transferring effective prevention and intervention for those at risk of and suffering from mental health, substance use, and other addictive behaviors.

**Authors’ note**

The authorship order reflects the alphabetical order of the editors’ surnames.

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