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EXPLORING BEST PRACTICE IN KNOWLEDGE
TRANSLATION: ENHANCING AUSTRALIAN
YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH CARE THROUGH
GLOBAL CONNECTIONS AND INSIGHTS

**FELLOWSHIP REPORT FOR THE CRESWICK
FOUNDATION**

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APPLICANT DETAILS

ORGANISATION DETAILS	
Company Name	Orygen Ltd
ABN	85 098 918 686
Address	35 Poplar Road, Parkville VIC 3052
Website	https://www.orygen.org.au/
ACNC Registration	https://www.acnc.gov.au/charity/charities/c6c60d57-39af-e811-a963-000d3ad244fd/profile
Type of Org	<p>Orygen is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. It is a charitable entity with Deductible Gift Recipient Status and is an approved research institute. The Company has three Members: the Colonial Foundation, The University of Melbourne and Melbourne Health.</p> <p>Orygen is led by a Board of Directors. The Board's operations are informed and supported by committees.</p>

CONTACT POINT	
Name	Dr Isabel Zbukvic
Position	Senior Research Fellow
Email	Isabel.zbukvic@orygen.org.au; research@orygen.org.au
Telephone	03 9966 9100

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This fellowship explored knowledge translation and implementation science in youth mental health through an intensive program visiting leading institutions in the USA and Canada during February – March 2025. The project aimed to learn from international leaders to enhance youth mental health service delivery in Australia. Key findings highlighted the importance of knowledge brokers, equity considerations in implementation science, and the potential of a *learning health system* framework for supporting service delivery.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

This fellowship was undertaken to explore best practices in knowledge translation and implementation science within youth mental health services internationally, with a primary focus on Canadian systems. The fellowship aimed to identify transferable models, frameworks, and practices that could enhance the implementation of evidence-based practices in Australian youth mental health services.

Knowledge translation aims to improve access to high-quality health care through evidence-based strategies such as training, facilitation, and policy development (1,2). Within the field of knowledge translation, *implementation science* investigates how to develop effective strategies, measure impact, and improve health and equity outcomes in healthcare (3). Critically, knowledge translation and implementation science aim to close the evidence-to-practice gap to improve access to high-quality evidence-based health and mental health care (4).

SIGNIFICANCE

The travel was significant as it provided an opportunity to observe firsthand how different health systems navigate the challenges of implementing evidence-based practices within diverse contexts. Canada, with its provincial healthcare structure and work in equity and First Nations health, offered valuable comparative insights for Australian implementation efforts. Additionally, the fellowship offered valuable connection to implementation scientists and clinician-researchers in the United States, where the field of implementation science has developed robust methodologies, networks and frameworks. This provided the opportunity to connect with experts who are actively providing direct support to health services, bridging the often-challenging gap between research and practice.

FELLOWSHIP ACTIVITIES AND FINDINGS

TRAVEL ITINERARY & KEY ENGAGEMENTS

The fellowship involved a series of visits across North America:

Week 1: New York, USA (February 23 - March 2, 2025)

- Columbia University: Meetings with implementation science and cognitive health research-practice experts
- OnTrackNY: Site visits to meet clinical teams

Week 2: Toronto and surrounds, Ontario, Canada (March 2 - 8, 2025)

- Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario (YWHO): Site visits to examine integrated youth services, presentation on *Knowledge Translation Reflections From Australia* to staff across the YWHO network

Week 3: Montreal, Quebec, Canada (March 8 - 12, 2025)

- McGill University: Meetings with research teams including discussion of knowledge translation (e.g. living review) methodologies and opportunities for collaboration related to youth mental health workforce development and translational research; presentation to research teams on two research projects
- ACCESS Open Minds: Site visits to youth mental health services

Week 4: Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada (March 12 - 23, 2025)

- Foundry youth mental health services: Meetings with researchers, knowledge mobilisation experts, and site visit to a Foundry Centre
- International Association for Youth Mental Health Conference: Participation and presentations including:
 - Research Network Day: Discussion with researchers, policymakers and young people in the *"Research to Policy and Practice Translation" Working Group* to identify priorities for a potential journal article following up on the Lancet Psychiatry Commission on Youth Mental Health
 - Pre-Conference Workshop: Participation in an interactive workshop *Global Improvements: How to Adapt Global Policies to Local Communities*
 - Presentations: Four presentations showcasing knowledge translation projects from Australia focused on service access and improvement, co-designing workforce resources with young people, and self-directed learning in youth mental health workforces

Week 5: Reflections (March 23 - 30, 2025)

The final week of this fellowship was dedicated to reflecting on the experience, consolidating notes, and beginning the process of translating learnings into actionable insights for the Australian context. This included:

- Synthesis of key themes and findings across all visited sites
- Documentation of promising practices, frameworks, and potential applications
- Planning for knowledge dissemination activities

KEY FINDINGS

The fellowship yielded several significant findings:

- **Learning Health System Framework:** Identified as a powerful model for guiding knowledge translation and continuous quality improvement activities, with strong potential for application in Australian contexts. The *learning health system* (5,6) offers a frameworks for continuously integrating research evidence, quality improvement methods, and practice-based knowledge to improve health outcomes and service delivery, making it particularly valuable for youth mental health services seeking to implement evidence-based practices.
- **Knowledge Brokers:** The critical role of *knowledge brokers* (7) – individuals who act as conduits between stakeholders such as service providers and academic researchers – was highlighted across settings, exemplified by professionals such as those in clinician-researcher roles, who adapt research evidence for practical application.
- **Contextual Adaptability:** The success of adaptive integrated youth service models (8) that respond to local needs demonstrated the importance of flexibility in implementation approaches.
- **Equity Considerations:** The field of implementation science is increasingly focused on the application of equity principles (9). Although promising work underway to expand this area, the political context in the US at the time of visiting posed a serious threat to progress, highlighting the need for health and academic communities to galvanise and advocate in this space (10).
- **Outer Context Influence:** The significant impact of sociopolitical contexts on implementation was observed across different settings. A positive example was government support for the expansion of

integrated youth services in Canada, which was seen as a creating a sense of momentum for the sector.

- **Lived Experience Integration:** Co-creation and co-design with young people, families, and community representatives (such as First Nations elders and LGBTQIA+ advocates) emerged as essential methodologies for effective implementation.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

The fellowship provided significant professional growth opportunities through:

- connection to experts engaging with innovative methodologies within knowledge translation work – e.g. co-design with young people, families and communities, and living systematic reviews (which are continually updated as new evidence emerges);
- development of international professional networks and potential collaborations;
- enhanced understanding of how to effectively build implementation teams that include dedicated health equity specialists and use local and population-level data to inform decision-making;
- insight into the practical application of implementation science concepts – e.g. learning health system framework.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Several key reflections emerged from the fellowship experience:

- **Trust as foundation:** The recurring theme of trust between knowledge brokers, knowledge mobilisation teams and service providers highlighted the relational nature of implementation work. This is increasingly recognised in the implementation science literature (11,12) and something I intend to explore more deeply through my work.
- **Terminology differences:** The observation that "Knowledge Translation" and Knowledge Mobilisation" are perceived as more applied and relevant to real-world practice, while "Implementation Science" is viewed as more academic. This has implications for how I communicate my work to different audiences and stakeholders e.g. those involved in service delivery vs researchers vs service users.
- **Equity thinking:** The work of Canadian teams and services to embed equity, lived experience participation with families as well as young people, and First Nations community engagement presented valuable opportunities for further exploration and learning for Australia.

IMPACT AND APPLICATIONS

The fellowship has significantly contributed to my professional development by providing concrete frameworks and strategies for knowledge translation that can be applied in the Australian youth mental health context. In particular, the *learning health system* framework offers a comprehensive approach that can be adapted to guide quality improvement and implementation efforts, and which I have already adopted to inform recommendations to the Australian Department of Health, Disability and Ageing for workforce development in the youth mental health sector.

I plan to integrate the findings from this fellowship into my work by:

- advocating for the creation of dedicated knowledge broker and implementation champion roles within youth mental health services;
- implementing and refining living review methodologies for maintaining up-to-date evidence synthesis;
- applying the learning health system framework to structure evaluation and continuous improvement processes and recommendations for mental health services;

- enhancing equity considerations in knowledge translation and implementation efforts, particularly for LGBTQIA+ and First Nations communities.

Long-term benefits include the potential for establishment of international collaborations for knowledge sharing, and development of implementation science expertise that bridges academic and practical applications.

DISSEMINATION PLAN

PROFESSIONAL SHARING

I plan to disseminate findings through:

- presentation at Orygen's Colloquia (attended by all Orygen staff including researchers, knowledge translation specialists, clinical staff, policy and communications specialists);
- presentation at Orygen's Implementation Science Interest Group (bi-monthly meetings attended by researchers and knowledge translation specialists across the organisation);
- resources for youth mental health professionals and governments informed by key learnings e.g. learning health system framework.

Future Collaborations

I will maintain and develop connections made during the fellowship through:

- meetings to further discuss key methodologies - e.g. since returning to Australia, I have met with McGill University colleagues about living review methodologies;
- meetings to identify opportunities for collaboration - e.g. since returning to Australia, I have met with Columbia University implementation science and health equity researchers;
- exploring collaborative conference presentation and grant opportunities with international partners.

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- Columbia University and OnTrackNY teams
- Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario teams
- McGill University researchers and ACCESS Open Minds teams
- Foundry teams
- International Association for Youth Mental Health Conference organisers

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Orygen acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands we are on and pays respect to their Elders past and present. Orygen recognises and respects their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationships to Country, which continue to be important to the First Nations people living today.

ORYGEN.ORG.AU
+61 3 9966 9100
35 POPLAR ROAD
PARKVILLE VIC 3052
AUSTRALIA

DR ISABEL ZBUKVIC
ISABEL.ZBUKVIC
@ORYGEN.ORG.AU

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