

CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Innovation Pollination: Empowering Health Care Staff to Solve Problems and Mine Opportunities Using Design Thinking Methodology

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Introduction

Challenge: How might we empower healthcare teams to effectively problem-solve using design thinking?

VHA Home HealthCare's (VHA) FastLabs Facilitation Session is a Design Thinking (DT) based workshop that teaches staff to facilitate a 90-minute problem-solving session with their team and across departments to enhance service integration. The sessions:

- Create a common language and process for innovation, ensuring staff clearly define the problem they are solving for.
- “Pollinate” by training staff as facilitators to spread approach across the organization.
- Encourage diversity of thought, representation and equity, using a structured process for idea evaluation instead of participants' ability to influence.
- Have a bias to action and focus on testing and learning.

Context and Objective

The sweeping transformation, and skills required to navigate Ontario's changing healthcare landscape, were deftly described in KPMG's 2019 report: Plotting the course: Ten crucial conversations about system change. <http://bit.ly/KPMGhealth>

“There is a need to recognize and equip the healthcare workforce with the necessary leadership skills to enable a more decentralized system, to enable decision-making at the front line and within teams.”

FastLabs sessions fortify diverse teams with practical skills and put user experience (often patients and families) at the centre. The concept meshes the disciplined approach of DT's—EMPATHIZE-DEFINE-IDEATE-PROTOTYPE-TEST—with real-world time and capacity limitations. It was adapted from innovation influencers AJ & Smart <http://bit.ly/AJSMARTLDJ> and other researched corporate models to suit a healthcare setting.

Targeted priority population included

- Managers, supervisors or “emerging leaders” at point-of-care or administration.
- Those struggling with critical issues including: client services, call centre and best practice.
- Staff in environments where struggles impact patient experience and/or staff morale.

Highlights

Since 2019, VHA has run five FastLabs facilitation training sessions—two in-person, three virtually - with external support from innovation consultancy, AdapativeX Inc. 70 staff were trained, including: senior/middle managers, point-of-care supervisors, best practice leaders and our client and family liaison.

Outcomes

- Eleven FastLabs or variations (i.e. using DT) were run organization-wide on challenges/opportunities including: PSW COVID capacity, remote patient monitoring (RPM), and improving integrated work flows. Some relied on client interviews for background (e.g., COVID), while RMP included a client partner in the exercise.
- Several ideas have/will be tested, including a ground-breaking pilot for Essential Care on Weekends with Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network.
- 100% of FastLabs/DT session participants agreed sessions were more effective than traditional roundtable brainstorming.
- 96% of FastLabs/DT participants agreed the session produced meaningful outcomes that have been or will be tested.
- 100% of facilitation attendees enrolled in Innovation Community of Practice.

Transferability

75% of participants have recommended using FastLabs to a colleague—suggesting good organizational transferability and “pollination.”

Conclusion

- FastLabs pollination helps build organizational problem-solving capacity and collaboration. Most staff believe it generates meaningful results to trial.
- The approach takes time to seed, however, once people participate in and experience the benefits of DT, demand quickly grows.
- While FastLabs have positively impacted VHA, it has the potential to support system integration initiatives like Ontario Health Teams.