

# OCCTH 566: Knowledge Translation Policy Brief

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**UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA**  
WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM



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Research

▶ Class Presentation Slides

Faculty Workshop Slides

[Home](#) > [Class Presentation Slides](#)

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# The Writing *Process*

## Getting started

- Explore the assignment
- Make rough notes
- Pick a tentative topic



## Drafting/revising

- Get feedback on your draft/revise: work on higher order concerns: structure, argument, organization

## Editing

- Work on style and lower order concerns
- Proofread, consult checklist for assignment



**Genre:** policy brief & annotated bibliography  
persuasive, analytic  
evidence-based, research-to-practice  
knowledge translation

**Length:** 2 pages, single-spaced 11 pt. font (1200-1500 words)

**Value:** 50%

**Due:** April 14th, 2016

**References:** Vancouver



**Select** an unmet need or intervention for a health/ social service issue. Write a policy brief pitched at the director level of a relevant organization that **outlines** and **synthesizes** current evidence-based responses/ solutions to this need, and **analyses** the strengths/ weaknesses/costs of each. Recommend and **justify** the specific action(s) that you feel would best meet the need.



## Policy brief:

- Identifies **problem/need**
- Translates informing **evidence**
- Outlines **responses/solutions**
- [Proposes **recommendation(s)**]

**Problem → discussion of possibilities → response**

- Not attempting to cover every aspect of an issue: focus on the most *pertinent, compelling, and exigent* aspects.

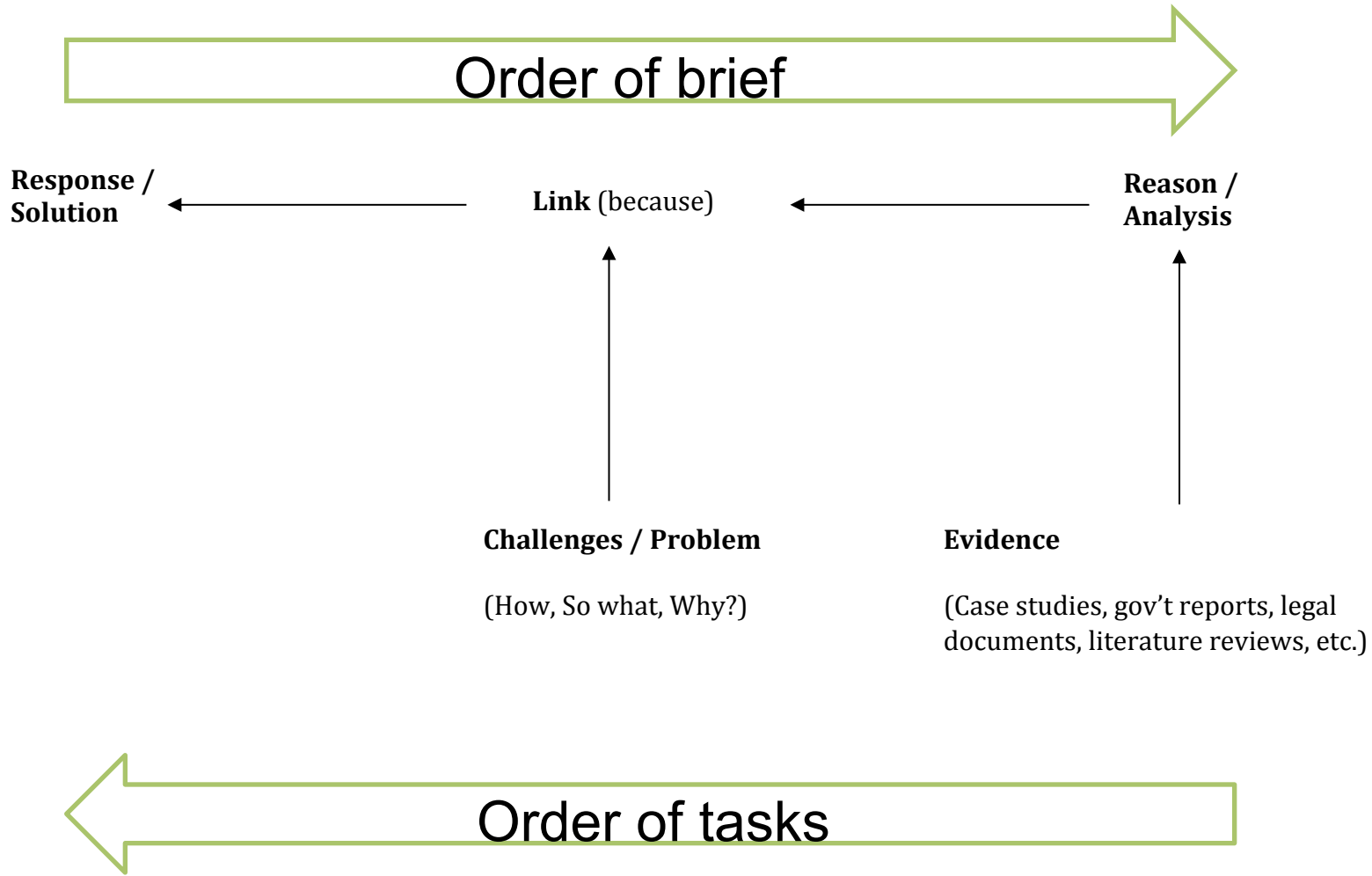


Point-first approach:

- **Introduction (purpose, need/intervention, question/thesis, outline)**
- **Background**
- **Discussion**
- **Recommendations and summary**

Could be:

- 1) **Point first** (thesis in introduction), or
- 2) **Point last** (question in intro, thesis in recommendations)







## Three parts:

1. Outline **problem**: show that problem exists; outline aspects of problem
2. **Possible responses** to problem: translate pertinent evidence for a non-expert audience; describe significance and implications; raise potential limitations, challenges, effects of responses
3. **Policy** recommendations: suggested policy responses and intended outcomes



## What are potential problems/topics?

- Wait times for developmental assessments of children
- Shortage of life-skills training for persons with mental health conditions
- Need for older adults to have a functional assessments prior to discharge from emerg
- 
-



## Point-first approach:

- **Title:** explicitly states problem/response, catches attention
- **Executive summary:** provides concise overview of problem, actions, & recommendations
- **Problem:** states what is the specific issue at hand (what, when, where, how)
- **Background/context:** shows that the problem requires a response (why)
- **Existing responses:** what is already in place; strengths/limitations of these approaches
- **Policy options:** catalogue of strongest possible responses
- **Critique of options:** strengths/weaknesses; costs; assessment option;, etc.
- **Recommendation(s):** suggested policy option(s), with rationale



Need to consider:

- **Audience**
- **Tone** (professional vs. academic)
- **Evidence** & other supports (relevant, recent, actionable)
- **Focus** (specific vs. broad)
- **Clarity**
- **Readability** (sections, divisions, charts, bulleted lists, etc.)
- **Practicality** of policy options

**“brevity with clarity”**



## Brevity with clarity:

- Use active, declarative sentences
  - Avoid overly-long and complex sentences
  - Avoid passive constructions
- Avoid modifiers (adjectives, adverbs)
- Maintain a disinterested, objective tone
  - Avoid placing yourself within the text (“I”)
  - Avoid emotional appeals or attempts to blatantly spin the issue/responses
- Avoid jargon: professional vs. academic
  - Expertise without obfuscation
- Be direct
  - “This policy brief addresses [need/problem]”



## Ways to introduce evidence:

- Direct quotation
- Paraphrase
- Summary

Avoid quoting directly: takes up space; cedes authority; wastes readers time.

**Paraphrase and summarize:** more concise; focuses attention on specific aspects of evidence; creates a persuasive narrative; keeps focus on *content* rather than *rhetoric*

**Always indicate when you're drawing on the ideas of another**



Always have a **topic sentence** that explicitly indicates what the paragraph is about, and how it fits within the larger document

Always have a **transition sentence** that connects each chunk of argument to the next:

- use transitional words/phrases
- link back to main claim or sub-claim

## **Transitions for purpose**

For this purpose	In order to	To that end
In order that	So that	To this end

## **Transitions for argument or proof**

Accordingly	Despite	In addition	Nevertheless	Therefore
Admittedly	Even so	In any case	Nonetheless	Thus
Although	Even though	In conclusion	Obviously	To be sure
At this level	Evidently	Indeed	Of course	Truly
Because	For	In fact	On the one	Whatever the
Besides	For the same	In light of this	hand... On	case may be
But	reason	evidence	the other hand	What's more
Certainly	Furthermore	In summary	Regardless	
Clearly, then	Granted	Meanwhile	Since	
Consequently	However	Moreover	That is	

## **Transitions for exemplification, illustration, addition or clarification**

Additionally	For instance	More importantly	Specifically	The next part
Again	Further	Moreover	Such as	To add
Also	Furthermore	Most importantly	Take the case of	To clarify
And then	Generally	One characteristic...	That is to say	To demonstrate
As an illustration	speaking	Another characteristic	The final type	To explain
Besides	i.e., (that is)	One example...	The first	To illustrate
Besides that	In addition	another	(second, third)	To put it another
Case in point	In another case	example	category	way
Equally	In general	One kind... another	The last group	To rephrase it
important	In other words	kind	The most	What's more
Finally	In particular	One way... Another	important	
First	In the same way	way	component	
Following this	In this case	On this occasion	The most important	
further	In this situation	Point in fact	example... The	
For example	Like	Pursuing this further	next example	

## **Transitions for emphasis or repetition**

Absolutely	Certainly	In brief	Obviously	To repeat
Always	Definitely	Indeed	Of course	Undeniably
As I have noted	Emphatically	In fact	Perennially	Undoubtedly
As I have said	Eternally	Naturally	Positively	Unquestionably
As has been noted	Extremely	Never	Surely	Without a doubt
Assuredly	Forever	Nobody denies	Surprisingly	Without reservation
By all means	In any case	No doubt	To be sure	

## **Transitions for comparison and contrast**

Although	Despite	Likewise	hand... On the	Vis à vis
After all	Even though	Meanwhile	other hand	Where
As	However	Nevertheless	Otherwise	Whereas
Balanced against	In comparison	Nonetheless	Similarly	While
But	In contrast	Of course	Still	Yet
By comparison	In the same way	Once in a while	Though	
Compared to	In spite of	On the contrary	Unlike	
Conversely	Like	On the one	Up against	



## **Transitions for concession and exception**

Admittedly	Granted	Nevertheless	Once in a while	Though
Although this may be true	However	Nonetheless	Perhaps	To be sure
Certainly	In spite of	Of course	Regardless	True
Despite	It is true that	Of course, it is true that	Sometimes	Yet
	Maybe		Still	

## **Transitions for cause and effect**

Accordingly	Because	For this reason	The first	important cause
Another cause	Consequently	On account of	(second, third)	/ effect
Another effect	For	Since	cause / effect	Therefore
As a result	For that reason	So	The most	

## **Transitions for narration and process**

After	At first	third	Meanwhile	(second, third)
After a few hours (days, months, years)	At last	Firstly...	Nearly	step
After that	At the same time	secondly... thirdly	Never	The next step
Afterwards	Before	Formerly	Next	The last step
Almost	Before long	Frequently	Now	Then
Always	By this time	Immediately	Once	Thereafter
As	Earlier	In the first place	Previously	Two hours
As soon as	Eventually	In the meantime	Soon	(days, months, years) later
	Finally	Later	Subsequently	When/While
	First... second...	Later on	The first	

## **Transitions for description**

Above	Beyond	Inside	On one side... On the other side	The least important
Behind	In	Nearby	Outside	The most important
Below	In back of	Next to	Over	Under
Between	In front of	On		

## **Transitional chains**

Basically... similarly... as well	In the first place... pursuing this further... finally
First(ly)... second(ly)... third(ly)...	In the light of the... it is easy to see that
Generally... furthermore... finally	In this case... in another case
In the first place... also... lastly	To be sure... additionally... lastly
In the first place... just in the same way... finally	

## **Transitions for conclusion or summarization**

Accordingly	Finally	In final analysis	In summary	To summarize
As a result	Hence	In final consideration	Lastly	To sum up
As I have said	In brief	In general	On the whole	Therefore
As I have shown	In conclusion	In sum	Summing up	Thus
Consequently	Indeed		To conclude	

## **References**

- Kirszner, L.G. & Mandell, S.R. (2006). *Writing first: Practice in context* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- The OWL at Purdue (2007). *Transitional devices*. Retrieved November 1, 2007, from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/574/02/>
- Transition words* (n.d.). Retrieved November 1, 2007, from <http://larae.net/write/transition.html>
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## Make the document **readable** and **useable**:

- Use whitespace: don't fill the page completely
- Use headings, **bold**, underlined, and *italicized* text to
  - emphasize key terms,
  - indicate section breaks, and
  - separate policy options
- Use lists (numbered, bulleted, etc.) to list options



disorders (WMSDs) was recognized by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in 1997.(3) WMSDs, already prevalent among healthcare workers, are projected to increase unless ergonomic interventions are matched with HIT use.(1) Consequently, policies are needed to facilitate best practices for the prevention of WMSDs among healthcare workers by mitigating the ergonomic hazards of HIT/laptop computer use.

### **Need for New Policy:**

The impact of WMSDs is significant upon both employees and employers. To illustrate, the Canadian Center of Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) recognizes WMSDs as a leading cause of human suffering, lost productivity, and economic burden upon society.(4) As such, workplace safety policies should be periodically reviewed to protect the safety, health, and wellness of employees, while minimizing economic burden upon employers.(5) This brief outlines gaps in current policy and makes recommendations for review by upper management.

Recognizing the impact to employees, a survey of Canadians reveals there is a strong demand for employers to prevent WMSDs by developing and regularly assessing strong ergonomic policies.(6) To meet this demand, employers should seek to establish workplace safety-cultures, which are shown to enhance quality of care for patients, increase commitment and satisfaction for employees, and improve system performance for employers.(7) To effectively create such a culture, all workplace hazards, including awkward postures related to HIT use should be addressed.(1)

The economic costs faced by employers include lost productivity, absenteeism, and increased worker's compensation, disability and healthcare costs.(3) For example, Alberta Human Services reports that WMSDs account for approximately 30 percent of lost-time claims among Alberta workers.(8) Of unique significance to Alberta Health Services (AHS) is the fact that people with workplace injuries become heavier users of the healthcare system after their injury, putting greater economic strain on the health authority as both an employer and provider of healthcare services.(9) Accordingly, AHS should take particular interest in the prevention of WMSDs.

### **Policy Aims and Suggestions:**

Policies should aim to reduce and prevent the human and economic toll of laptop-related WMSDs. Best practices outlined by Work Safe Alberta are not currently being followed by AHS in their entirety.(10) By law, according to Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) standards, AHS has a duty not only to accommodate but also to prevent workplace injuries.(10) Current policies within AHS provide short training



**Policy Option 2:** Another policy option is to follow best practices outlined by Work Safe Alberta and pair ergonomic education with workstation adjustments as a preventive measure for all employees.(10) Benefits to this policy are that all employees, including laptop users, can maintain ergonomic postures during computer use, thereby alleviating risk factors and helping to prevent the development of WMSDs. A recent study found improvements in posture and reductions in WMSD pain for employees who received education paired with ergonomic workstation adjustments, versus those who received education alone.(11)

A simple, cost effective solution to implementing this policy is to issue a portable adjustable laptop stand and separate keyboard to all laptop users. This will allow employees to raise their laptop screen to recommended heights while maintaining a neutral position for keyboarding, thereby eliminating postural risk factors.(10) Accordingly, while the cost of this equipment is relatively low compared to the cost of the laptop itself, it has potential for cost savings to the organization by reducing the incidence of WMSDs. Additionally, because these items are portable, they can be used both in the office, in the community for homecare workers, and at home for telecommuters. Disadvantages to this policy are the upfront costs associated with purchasing the equipment as well as the cost of training employees to use them. There is also risk that some employees will not utilize the equipment as intended.

**Policy Option 3:** Research suggests that an ideal policy option is to combine ergonomic interventions with input from employees, a strategy known as participatory ergonomics.(10) This policy strategy combines expertise and training by Workplace Health and Safety (WHS), ergonomists, and/or occupational therapists alongside the input of employees to develop an optimal ergonomics strategy. This is important because a systematic review shows that workplaces that involve employees through participatory ergonomics demonstrate reduced WMSDs, worker's compensation claims, and lost days from work.(12) Another advantage of this policy is that it has the potential for greater 'buy-in' and compliance by employees, along with greater reassurance that ergonomic interventions are appropriately targeted and implemented. The main barrier to this strategy is that it will require the greatest time, resources, and upfront cost to implement, as well as the greatest organizational shift along the culture-of-safety continuum.

### **Summary:**

AHS can choose to (a) take no immediate action, but place these policy recommendations under review at the next policy meeting, (b) take action to implement one of these new policy measures as a pilot study within one sector of AHS, or (c) take action to implement one of these new policy measures



## 1) Provides guided overview of literature

- Why/How/What/Who/Where
- Purpose/Problem/Methods/Findings/Authority
- Background/Objective/Methods/Results/Conclusions

### **Abstract of article**

## 2) Indicates relevance of literature to brief

- Implications/Significance
- Answers the question, “So what?”
- How does each article support your brief?

### **3-4 sentences of your own analysis**





(1) Simpson A, Lamb S, Roberts P, Gardner T, Evans J. Does the type of flooring affect the risk of hip fracture?. *Age & Ageing* [serial on the Internet]. (2004, May), [cited April 10, 2013]; 33(3): 242-246. Available from: CINAHL Plus with Full Text.

**BACKGROUND:** The number of hip fractures occurring worldwide in 1990 was estimated at 1.7 million and is predicted to rise to 6.3 million by 2050. The vast majority occurs as a result of simple falls and the impact of the femoral trochanter with the floor. Previous studies have addressed the problem from the patient's side of the impact. Little research has been carried out on the other surface involved in the impact, the floor. **STUDY LOCATION:** 34 residential care homes. **METHODS:** (1) The mechanical properties of the floor were measured with force transducers. (2) The number and location of falls and fractures on the various floors were recorded prospectively for 2 years. The threshold for reporting falls in different care homes was assessed using a standardized set of scenarios. **RESULTS:** A total of 6,641 falls and 222 fractures were recorded. Wooden carpeted floors were associated with the lowest number of fractures per 100 falls. The risk of fracture resulting from a fall was significantly lower compared to all other floor types (odds ratio 1.78, 95% CI 1.33-2.35). The mean impact force was significantly lower on wooden carpeted floors: 11.9 kN compared to the other floor types. **DISCUSSION:** The possible implications of our findings are considerable. Residents of homes are typically frail and many have a propensity to falls. In designing safer environments for older people, the type of floor should be chosen to minimize the risk of fracture. This may result in a major reduction in fractures in the elderly.

**Relevance of this evidence to the brief:** This article is relevant to the topic of falls in that it compares the force of falls on various types of flooring, as well as the hip fractures that resulted from these falls. This study highlights the impact the environment, in this case flooring, can have on the outcome of a fall. This article is the basis for this brief.



- Get feedback from a “trusted reader”
  - Consider using other students in the course or the Centre for Writers
- Ask readers to read for specific purposes: thesis, structure, transitions, development of a particular paragraph or idea.
- Focus on higher-order concerns before lower-order ones



**Towards the due date, switch your focus from**

**higher-order concerns** (arrangement, arguments, evidence) to

**lower-order concerns**: proofreading, grammar, citation format,  
grammar/spelling





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