

Letter from the Director

Everyone is wondering how to be effective as we encounter more rapid change in our daily work. Making decisions for change, even rapid change, is best guided by use of rigorous evidence gathering combined with the wisdom and values we bring forth. Three articles feature just that in this issue. We feature an overview of a recent national presentation that focuses on emerging trends about building effective interdisciplinary research programs highlighting CHRP as a success on the national scene; the use of action research as a research design methodology well-suited for rapid decision making; and a new student initiative about safety and quality being launched on campus. Rise to the occasion!

Kimberly Galt, Pharm.D., Ph.D.
Director, Center for Health
Services Research and Patient Safety

Coming Soon

“Research Methods Journal Club”

Date: April 18
Time: 9:30 a.m.
Location: Thune Conference
Room, Health Sciences Library

“Grants Boot Camp” Series

Speakers:
Michon Bowen, Accounting Services
Wendy Duerfeldt Schutte, School of
Pharmacy and Health Professions

Topic:
Post Award Management

Date: April 18
Time: 10:30 a.m.
Location: Thune Conference
Room, Health Sciences Library

To RSVP please contact:

Jamie Steemken
Project Manager
jamiesteemken@creighton.edu

Volume 4, Issue 2

April 2013

Action Research...A Methodology for Implementing Change Founded on Explanations, Understandings and Deeper Meanings

By Bill Raynovich, N.R.E.M.T.P., Ed.D., M.P.H., Associate Professor of EMS Education

The most common view of research conjures up images of disinterested investigations into phenomena, where unbiased researchers test hypotheses and collect and analyze outcomes data. At the highest levels of evidence for causation and hypothesis testing – the scientific experiment – the researcher is blinded to the treatment and control groups, as are the analysts, until the code is broken and the results of the test are revealed. Taking a step down the inferential ladder of evidence for causation and prediction, we find observational studies, with prospective studies carrying more weight than retrospective studies, and cross sectional studies providing only a snapshot in time of what is. Taking one more step down the inferential ladder, we find studies such as Naturalistic Inquiries and Case Series. Action Research, according to some social scientists, provides a level of evidence below these.

In Action Research, a practitioner, often an administrator or a key stakeholder in an organization, introduces a change initiative or action to the organization and then deliberately and systematically conducts an IRB-approved study into how the organization responds to the

change initiative and continues to observe the organization over time, assessing progress or resistance toward acceptance and adaptation to the change. In formal Action Research, those in the organization are fully informed about the research study and are active participants in the process. In a sense, all reflective practitioners seeking to lead an organization through a transformational change practice a form of Action Inquiry, where the group dynamics are observed and the practitioner seeks to learn from the process and make accommodations to improve effectiveness and acceptance.¹

The term Action Research was first coined in 1944 by Kurt Lewin, the iconic social scientist who pioneered psychological studies under contract with the United States Army in an effort to bring about a transformational change in the dietary habits of Americans.² The goal was to shift from a heavy dietary reliance on meat toward vegetables during World War II.^{3,4} Lewin described Action Research as “a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action and research leading to social action” that uses “a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action.” In Action Research, the researchers

actively participate in an organization; seeking to bring about a positive change while systematically collecting objective and subjective data for analysis, applying inductive reasoning to develop hypotheses, implementing changes and, ultimately, developing theories of change informed by the evidence.

The systematic inquiry conducted in Action Research involves five essential steps: (1) determine the research question, (2) determine the data to collect, how to collect it and when, (3) collect and analyze the data, (4) describe the results of the analysis and how the information can be applied and (5) report the findings.⁵ The data to be collected may include participant surveys, existing documents and observations of participant reactions to interventions. The critical steps in assuring research validity are accomplished through careful systematic and rigorous recording of observations followed by validation through triangulation with data sources, cross fact-checking and source-checking of impressions and observations. The facts of what occurred in an Action Research study are not in dispute but the interpretations of meanings and consequences may be open to

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

Action Research...A Methodology for Implementing Change Founded on Explanations, Understandings and Deeper Meanings

differing points of view and conclusions. The combined reflective wisdom and hypothesis testing are what inductively lead to the formation of hypotheses. While Action Research does not attempt to provide conclusive evidence about causation or provide a statistically significant acceptance or rejection of a null hypothesis, it is an effective study design for explaining how or why socially complex changes take place in organizations.⁶

At Creighton University, Action Research is the predominant methodology employed by Educational Doctorate (EdD) students in

the Interdisciplinary Doctoral Leadership (ILD) program. All of the students admitted to the ILD program are highly accomplished professionals who are still engaged in their careers. The Action Research method provides a means of conducting research within the organizations where they are key administrators or stakeholders. Action Research is not just for students. All professional practitioners who strive to bring about a positive change that will result in a significant shift in professional practice, thus shifting the culture, will be working against strong forces of tradition and resiliency.^{7,8} Action Research in these instances provides a vehicle for study and learning about organizational change dynamics, that effective methods for promoting transformational change can be realized.

There are many approaches that researchers can take when setting out to design an Action Research project. Some researchers will place greater emphasis on taking an unbiased and purely objective approach to examining the artifacts of an organization, e.g., existing documents,

facilities and symbols of power, while other researchers might focus on the culture and formal or informal interviews and observed interpersonal and group dynamics of an organization. However, an overriding critical principle for all Action Research studies is that the people in the organization are each a "part of the whole" and embody experiences in a community of other subjects. Each member of the organization gives meaning to the social structure and environment through participation and an understanding of the social structure and cultural dynamics can lead to deep understandings and meanings through a systematic investigation.⁹ The value of Action Inquiry is in the interweaving of first, second and third person experiences and interpretations.¹

Through Action Research, we can appreciate the diversity of meanings, knowledge and abilities of those involved in a transformational change and can have opportunities to influence the processes and contribute to a positive transformation of an organization. ▲

References:

1. Torbert WR. *Action Inquiry: The Secret of Timely and Transforming Leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers; 2004.
2. Lewin K. Action research and minority problems. *J Soc Issues*. 1946;2:34-46.
3. Gold M, Ed. *The Complete Social Scientist: A Kurt Lewin Reader*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association; 1999.
4. Smith MK. Kurt Lewin: Groups, Experiential Learning and Action Research. <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-lewin.htm>. Accessed March 18, 2013.
5. Johnson AP. *A Short Guide to Action Research*, 4th ed. Boston, MA: Pearson; 2011.

(Continued on page 3)

An Action Research Study Conducted by Researchers at Creighton's Center for Health Services Research and Patient Safety

Kimberly Galt, Pharm.D., Ph.D., Kevin Fuji, Pharm.D. and Jennifer Faber, Pharm.D., recently sought to improve patient safety in rural Nebraska by introducing a "blame-free" event reporting network that would provide a virtual community for patient safety and risk events for rural pharmacists. As they introduced the network and recruited participants, they measured acceptance and participation. Over 12 months, the researchers conducted periodic interviews to assess attitudes and trends in activity reported by the participants, measured the rates and quality of participation, and analyzed the effectiveness of the process.▲

An Action Research Study Applicable to Current Organizational Changes Taking Place at Creighton University and Alegant Creighton Health

Snoeren and Frost (2011) conducted an Action Research study where two nursing schools collaborated on an experiment by creating an innovative patient care unit, or a Care Innovations Unit (CIU).¹⁰ The CIU was designed to be free of the traditional administrative, medical and nursing hierarchies and protocols, with the researchers working collaboratively with the combined nursing staff and a large number of rotation students from the two nursing schools. The results of the innovative effort were largely a failure. The lessons learned from the analysis are generalizable to other complex healthcare mergers, which can inform others about essential critical steps when introducing transformational innovations.▲

CHRP Director Presents at AACP Leadership for Institutional Effectiveness Meeting—Building Successful Interdisciplinary Research

By Jamie Steemken, Project Manager in the Schools of Pharmacy and Health Professions, Dentistry and Nursing

The 2013 American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) Interim Meeting focusing on “Leadership for Institutional Effectiveness” was held Feb. 9-12 in Rio Grande, Puerto Rico. Kimberly Galt, Pharm.D., Ph.D., from the Creighton University Center for Health Services Research and Patient Safety, attended as an invited speaker.

The audience for the AACP Interim Meeting included deans, associate/assistant deans, department chairs, assessment directors and aspiring leaders from schools of pharmacy across the nation.

Galt and David S. Forbes, R.Ph., M.S., Ph.D., from The University of Montana, presented at a session on research support and collaboration during the section titled “Building and Maintaining an Effective Program of Research and Scholarship.”

Forbes’ presentation was titled “Building an Effective Research Program on Federal, State and Private Support.” Galt’s presentation was titled

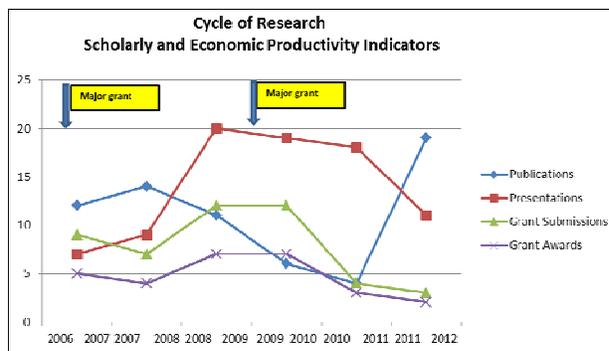
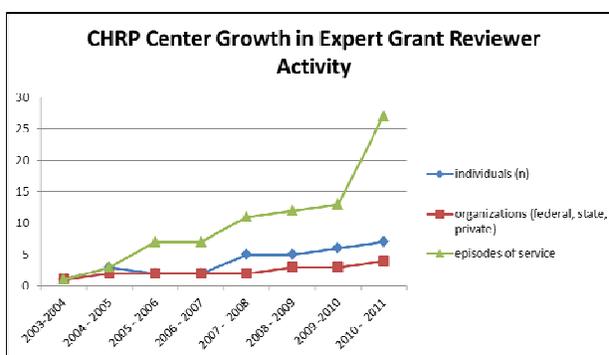
“Interprofessional/ Multidisciplinary Health Sciences Research and Collaboration.” A copy of the combined presentation document can be found at: www.aacp.org/meetingsandevents/IM/IM13/Documents/IM13ResearchScholarshipPOST.pdf.

Galt’s presentation focused on emerging trends that influence the ability to advance research, including the use of both public and private funding sources and enhancement of research efforts through interprofessional collaboration. This was illustrated by the exemplar growth and development of CHRP, a private university research center focused on interprofessional collaboration.

Growth was illustrated by recognition of faculty experts externally by federal agencies and foundations. Since CHRP formed in 2004, faculty expert study section reviewers invited from Creighton University have increased from one to seven – serving four federal agencies, and from one grant reviewer service episode to 27 annually.

Galt emphasized that CHRP faculty have received \$3,538,765 in external research grants since the initial university investment of \$331,000 in 2004. Overall, CHRP faculty realized 29.3 percent of the dollars of applications submitted. The external awards rate is 60 percent, with 66 publications,

84 presentations, 47 grant submissions and 28 grants/contracts awarded since 2004. ▲



(Continued from page 2)

6. Elliott J. Building educational theory through action research. In: Noffke SE, Somekh B, eds. *The SAGE Handbook of Educational Action Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications;2009:22-29.

7. Schein EH. *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 4th ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass;2010.

8. Hatch MJ. *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic, and Postmodern Perspectives*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press;2006.

9. Heron J, Reason P. A participatory inquiry paradigm. *Qual Inq*. 1997;3:274-294.

10. Snoeren M, Frost D. Realising participation within

an action research project on two care innovation units providing care for older people. *Int Pract Dev J*. 2011;1:3.

Center for Health Services
Research and Patient Safety
2500 California Plaza, Boyne 143
Omaha, NE 68178

Phone: 402.280.4944

Fax: 402.280.4809

E-mail: chrpinfo@creighton.edu

<http://chrp.creighton.edu>

Editorial Committee

Editors-in-Chief

Amy Abbott, Ph.D., R.N.

Kevin Fuji, Pharm.D.

Production Manager

Mavis Hall

Production Editor

Jamie Steemken

Contact for Contributions

Jamie Steemken

402.280.4944

jamiesteemken@creighton.edu

The Creighton University Center for Health Services Research and Patient Safety was founded to coordinate and support research and training efforts among faculty within an interdisciplinary and collaborative research environment. Faculty and staff serve the research interests of governmental agencies, health care facilities, employers, health care industry companies and educators.

Mission Statement: The Center for Health Services Research and Patient Safety conducts health services research to improve quality, safety and efficiency of patient care through the discovery, translation and dissemination of new knowledge.

Creighton
UNIVERSITY

Center for
Health Services Research
and Patient Safety

Inaugural Event Held at Creighton University

By Thomas J. Hansen, M.D., Associate Dean for Medical Education, Creighton University School of Medicine

On Feb. 28 Creighton University launched the formation of an Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) Open School Chapter at an inaugural event held at the Harper Center Ahmanson Ballroom. Michael Briddon, managing editor of the IHI Open School, was the guest presenter. Approximately 85 healthcare faculty and students attended the event.

The IHI Open School was founded in 2008 by Don Berwick, M.D. The purpose of the school is to provide online, open access to patient safety and quality improvement educational programs. There are currently 19 courses offered in the areas of Managing

Health Care Operations, Patient and Family Centered Care, Leadership, Population Health, Patient Safety and Quality Improvement. Creighton University health science students, residents and faculty are welcome to complete all of the courses at no charge.

There are 538 IHI Open School chapters in 57 countries composed of approximately 127,000 students and residents. Chapters in the United States include: University of Nebraska Medical Center, St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center in Phoenix, Georgetown University, St. Louis University and Loyola University.

Faculty advisors and student leaders will soon be recruited for

the interprofessional charter leadership team with chapter members in all of the health science schools.▲

Creighton
UNIVERSITY

Center for Health Services Research and Patient Safety
2500 California Plaza, Boyne 143
Omaha, NE 68178

Nonprofit Organization
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
OMAHA, NE 68178
PERMIT NUMBER 227