

Dr. Matt Kreuter
Principal Investigator
Ozioma
Washington University in St. Louis

Key factors in general behavior research that contributes to the sparse uptake and sustainable use of effective interventions

I think there's an assumption that's flawed that we have. And that assumption is that everything that works, every program or intervention we develop that works, and is empirically supported, is therefore worthy of dissemination. And I think that's wrong. If you look in the business world, the proportion of ideas that eventually make it to the market, forget about succeeding, just make it to the market, is tiny. One in 100, one in 1000. The number of patents that are issued that actually lead to something that benefits consumers, or not even that benefits them, that gets in front of them, is tiny. We have this delusion that everything we test that works is worthy of dissemination, and therefore we ought to push hard on it, and I think that's a mistake. So that's one reason that our work doesn't get disseminated is that it's not all worthy of dissemination.

Why isn't it worthy of dissemination? I think there are a number of reasons. One of them is that we tend not to design things with the end user in mind. So we're not designing for dissemination, that's changing, but still a lot of what we develop and test is not practice ready, not even close to practice ready. That leads into another limitation. A lot of – the way that we tend to test these interventions is often in contexts and settings that bear no resemblance at all to how it would be used in practice. So the evidence that we generate is largely irrelevant to how it would actually work in a practice setting. So – and then frankly, we are scientists, we are not skilled, most of us, are not skilled at making things that consumers would use directly. That's not what we're trained to do. We don't know how to do it, we have ideas about theories and how to change behavior. And we try to dress them up, but in the end, that's not our strength. Our strength is as scientists. So you have people who are carrying out key development tasks for which they're not well suited to do. So we end up with things that we can show work in a research study, but they're so far away from ready for practice, or ready for market, that dissemination might not even be the best idea for them.

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