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Innovation in changing practice: Upscale and spread of a proven intervention

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The difficulties in changing clinical practice to align with best available evidence are well documented. Research has shown it can take up to 17 years for new evidence-based initiatives to become part of routine clinical care. Implementation research has emerged as a rigorous field of scientific enquiry in health, that is, the study of how to implement practice change. Our group published results of a landmark trial of a successful nurse-led initiative with significant improvements in patient outcomes following acute stroke. Unfortunately, publication of trial results alone does not result in practice change. Our next challenge was how to 'scale up and spread' this effective intervention beyond those hospitals involved in our original trial. We undertook a state-wide translational study with a pre/ post-test design in all 36 eligible NSW hospitals. We demonstrated significant improvements in uptake of our nurse-led intervention. Building on this work, our current trial aims to implement practice change in emergency departments, the success of which will be rigorously measured in a cluster randomized controlled trial involving 26 hospitals in three Australian states and the Australian Capital Territory. Whilst our research has been undertaken in the clinical area of stroke, we believe our intervention is replicable and feasible in other health areas.