

MEETING ABSTRACT

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Knowledge brokers and how to communicate knowledge in 2010

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The importance of using healthcare evidence by policy-makers is widely recognized [1,2]. For over a decade, several strategies to improve the use of knowledge by policy makers have been promoted [3,4]. Among them, the use of individuals called “intermediaries” or “knowledge brokers” is presented as a potential strategy [5,6]. Situated at the organizational interface, these actors benefit from a strategic position allowing easier access to external knowledge [7]. Therefore, they must develop sufficient skills to be able to properly take profit of all opportunities to create the value for their organization. In fact, many authors consider brokers as true knowledge integrators that assess, interpret, synthesize, exploit and transfer relevant knowledge. Despite the availability of several studies that stress the importance of the multifaceted role of brokers, few have explored how they

concretely integrate or “absorb” knowledge and especially, which skills are necessary to ensure the success of such activities.

We propose a new conceptual model on research integration by knowledge brokers and provide an empirical testing of this proposed model. This conceptual framework (figure 1) builds upon recent theoretical developments on the concept of knowledge absorptive capacity [8] *i.e.*, starting from the following dimensions: knowledge identification (recognize value of new knowledge), acquisition, assimilation, transformation and knowledge exploitation. To test the conceptual framework, we collected survey data. The sample of 297 respondents included members of the knowledge brokerage community of practice (CoP). Data analysis allowed presenting a first portrait of the profile of knowledge brokers working in health

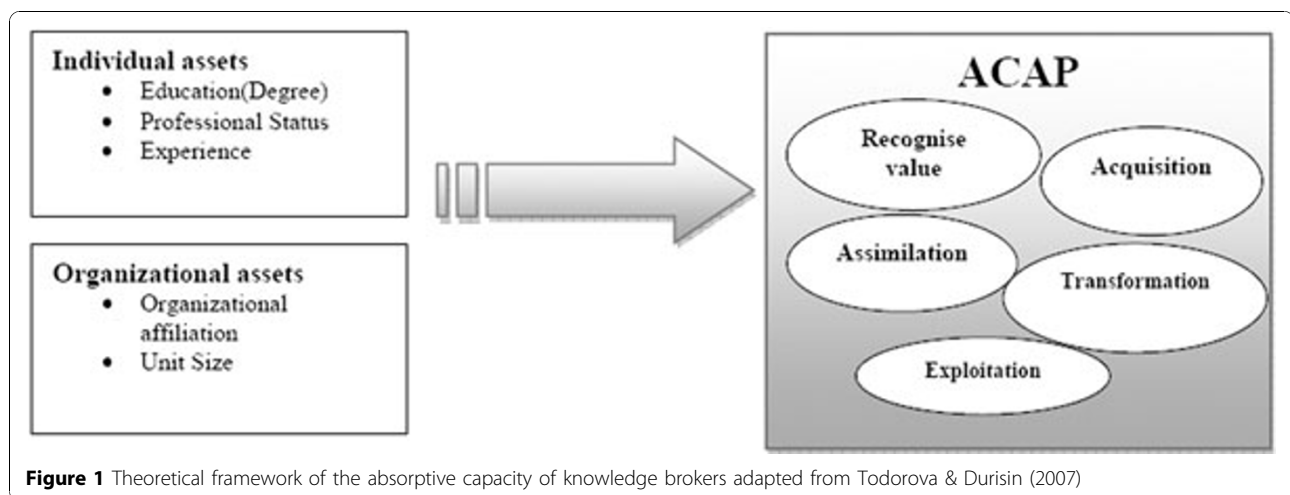


Figure 1 Theoretical framework of the absorptive capacity of knowledge brokers adapted from Todorova & Durisin (2007)

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organizations in Canada. In this perspective, several descriptive analyses, such as the distribution of knowledge brokers according to their membership organizations, their status, education (last Diploma), experience, *etc.*, were completed. The bivariate analyses used these dimensions to compare knowledge brokers regarding their knowledge absorptive capacity and the explanatory variables documented in the literature. These results show that the brokers' absorptive capacity of knowledge improved with higher levels of advanced education attainment, such as a PhD. However, employment status of brokers and their skills was also a factor affecting knowledge broker performance. It was found that brokers with professional status identify more knowledge than do brokers with senior managers' status. Conversely, brokers with senior manager status transform and exploit knowledge more effectively than do brokers with professional status. Also, other organizational factors that act as facilitators or barriers to knowledge absorption by brokers are the organizational unit size where they perform their daily tasks. We found that the brokers who are assigned to medium size units are more able to identify, assimilate, transform and create opportunities of knowledge exchange in their workplace (*i.e.*, actively exploit knowledge). Finally, these results allow us to establish the differences between the brokers according to their level of advanced education, status, organizational affiliation, and the size of the organizational unit. Further multivariate analyses are needed to identify all the factors associated with brokers' absorptive capacity.

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