



**The Role of Ix, Innovation, and  
Best Practices in Health Care Reform**

**Speakers:**

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**Background:**

On November 20, 2008, Senator Conrad and Senator Whitehouse asked the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct a study that will identify best practices to reduce costs and improve quality, as well as examine the extent to which these practices can be applied to the health care system.

While discussions of evidence-based and best practices are not new, the current trend is towards documenting innovation and best practices more efficiently to facilitate their replication in other settings.

The December webinar presented the collaborative work of Pro-Change Behavior Systems and HealthString, one of the projects highlighted in Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) Innovations Exchange.

**Health Care Reform and Best Practices**

**Ix Insights #1: Many congressional and administration health care leaders view health care best practices as an important building block for health care reform.** For example, in November of 2008, Senator Conrad and Senator Whitehouse requested that the GAO conduct a study on health care reform to:

- identify best practices in health care delivery
- determine the extent to which they could be applied nationwide

## Documenting (Better and) Best Practices

**Ix Insights #2: Somewhere between innovation and best practices are “emerging better practices”.** Even for the best of innovations, it takes time to demonstrate results across settings. Some experts describe innovative practices that show promise, but are not mature enough to be thoroughly researched, as “emerging better practices.”

**Ix Insights #3: The Ix Methodical Library is the central repository for Ix research, innovation, best practices, and emerging better practices.** The primary objective of the Ix Library is to integrate two bodies of research:

- peer-reviewed literature
- emerging better practices

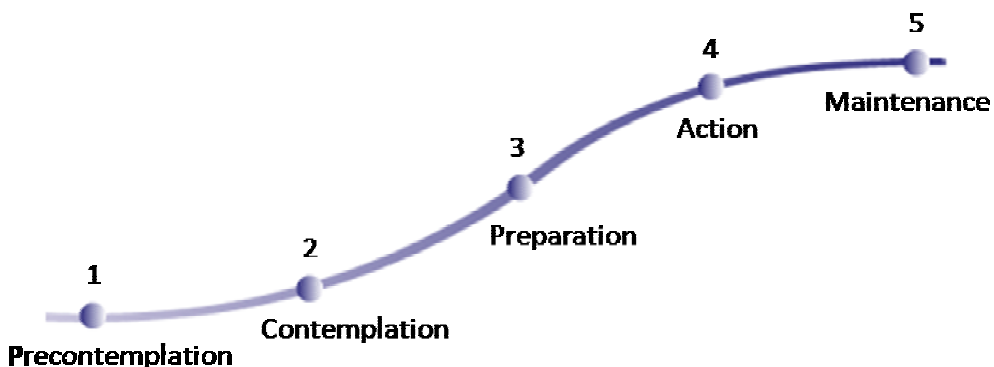
**Ix Insights #4: The AHRQ Health Care Innovations Exchange is a resource intended to accelerate the development and adoption of innovation in health care delivery.** The Innovations Exchange ([www.innovations.ahrq.gov](http://www.innovations.ahrq.gov)), which features several Ix initiatives (and the work of a number of IxAction Alliance members):

- serves as a resource for health care innovation and best practices
- is searchable by key word
- can be browsed by subject area (e.g., patient population, care setting, quality domain)

## AHRQ Innovations Exchange Case Study: ProChange/HealthString

**Ix Insights #5: The HealthString wellness program is a stress management intervention program based on the transtheoretical model (TTM) of behavior change, which tailors interventions based on five stages of behavior change.** While many behavior change interventions are standardized and “one-size-fits-all,” programs based on the TTM are tailored to:

- stage of change
- decisional balance
- self-efficacy
- processes of change



**Ix Insights #6: The wellness program uses computer programs that mimic the reasoning and problem solving of a human “expert.”** These programs are based on research that has identified processes and principles of change that are most important in each stage. The wellness program:

- continually assesses whether the individual is effectively using the identified processes and principles necessary for behavior change
- provides feedback that is relevant to the stage of behavior change
- describes how the individual has progressed on each dimension since last time

**Ix Insights #7: Wellness program participation led to greater use of healthy stress coping mechanisms.** Program participants showed significantly higher use of three healthy activities (planning, seeking professional help, and seeking help from others) than those in the control group.

**Ix Insights #8: Participants in the wellness program proceeded more quickly through the stress management process.** At a 6 month follow-up, 62 percent of program participants had begun to practice effective stress management behaviors, compared to about 40 percent in the control group.

## Conclusion

**Ix Insights #9: In order to maximize the effectiveness of Ix and other health care delivery system innovations, organizations should develop approaches that draw from different types of research.**

- Not all components of Ix are easily quantifiable and measurable over the short-term.
- Information therapy often serves as a backdrop or ideology of patient-centered care underlying approaches to improving patient outcomes.
- While some Ix approaches can be measured using quantitative research methods, other aspects of Ix are more conducive to qualitative or process-oriented research.
- The Ix Library will document the wide range of Ix activities, ranging from new ideas and innovations to well-researched best practices.

## Additional Resources

For the PowerPoint presentation, visit the IxInsights section of the member portal: <http://www.ixcenter.org/members/insights.cfm> and click on “PowerPoint Presentation” for IxInsights #41.

## Previous IxInsights Session on the Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change

**IxInsights #18**, August 2006: Information Therapy Supporting Behavior Change

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