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Building capacity for change: developing an evidence-based competencies framework to power champions

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ABSTRACT

Background Champions play a critical role in driving innovation, advancing evidence-based practice (EBP) and supporting its implementation across diverse healthcare settings. This paper describes the development of a Champions' Competencies Framework outlining the knowledge, skills, behaviours, attitudes, roles and responsibilities required of champions. Informed by existing literature, the framework is intended for members of the global Best Practice Champions Network (BPCN), including nurses, health and social service providers, volunteers and students.

Methods The framework was developed in three phases. Phase I involved a grey literature scan to identify sources describing champions' competencies. Phase II followed Arksey and O'Malley's scoping review methodology. Studies published between 1 January 2010 and 28 March 2025 were identified through searches of Cochrane, CINAHL, Embase, ePub, MEDLINE and PsycINFO using Boolean operators and Medical Subject Headings (MeSH). Titles and abstracts were independently screened by two reviewers followed by a full-text review. Phase III involved thematic synthesis and consultation with external partners to refine the framework.

Results 63 studies met the inclusion criteria and were analysed. Seven core competency roles were identified: leader, advocate, collaborator, communicator, content and context expert, facilitator and mentor, supported by 34 performance statements.

Conclusion Champions are key drivers of EBP in healthcare. This framework advances understanding of champion competencies and supports skill development, while enabling organisations to design competency-based training and tailor context-specific strategies to enhance the uptake and sustainability of EBPs.

WHAT IS ALREADY KNOWN ON THIS TOPIC

⇒ Champions are critical facilitators of evidence-based practice (EBP) implementation and quality improvement initiatives in healthcare.
⇒ Existing literature identifies champions as influential change agents who support implementation through leadership, facilitation and peer engagement.
⇒ Champion competencies are often described inconsistently and lack a structured, operationalised framework.

WHAT THIS STUDY ADDS

⇒ This study developed an evidence-based Champions' Competencies Framework using a multiphase approach and consultation with international champions.
⇒ The framework identifies seven core competency domains: leader, advocate, collaborator, communicator, content and context expert, facilitator and mentor.
⇒ The framework includes 34 performance statements to support champion development, training and self-assessment.

INTEGRATING IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE INTO QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROCESSES

With growing demand for safe, cost-effective and people-centred care, the importance of quality improvement continues to rise.[1 2] A key quality improvement strategy is integrating evidence-based practices (EBPs) into healthcare processes. EBP uses the best available research to guide practice and policies, ensuring safe, effective and high-quality care.[1–4] Integrating EBPs into healthcare is challenging, but the field of implementation science provides methods, strategies and theoretical frameworks to address this challenge.[5 6] Central to this process are champions, also referred to as change agents, who drive and support change initiatives within their organisations.[7 8] While champions play a critical

HOW THIS STUDY MIGHT AFFECT RESEARCH, PRACTICE OR POLICY

⇒ The framework provides organisations and educators with a structured approach to preparing and supporting champions to lead sustainable EBP change initiatives.
⇒ It may inform competency-based curricula, implementation strategies and evaluation approaches across healthcare settings.
⇒ The framework also provides a foundation for future research examining champion effectiveness, competency development and implementation outcomes.

role in EBP implementation, the core knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes they require to be effective remain unclear.[5 8 9] In this paper, we define champions as change agents who actively mobilise, support and advocate for change within their organisations.[7 8 10]

Champions as an implementation strategy

Champions play a critical role in supporting the adoption of EBP and advancing healthcare quality.[5 7 11 12] In 1999, a nursing association representing nurses, nurse practitioners and nursing students launched the Best Practice Guideline (BPG) programme (see online supplemental appendix A).[7 13] This programme includes the Best Practice Champions Network (BPCN), an implementation strategy created to foster active engagement and knowledge exchange among nurses and other health and social service providers as they implement EBPs within their organisations. The curriculum has been revised multiple times; current offerings include networking opportunities and comprehensive training grounded in the social movement action (SMA) and knowledge-to-action (KTA) frameworks.[7 14–16] SMA conceptualises change as a grassroots, people-led process, emphasising social influence and collective action to support knowledge uptake and sustainability.[15 16] KTA provides a structured, theory-informed and systematic approach to guide adaptation, application and evaluation of evidence in practice.[14] For the champion's curriculum to be effective in educating and developing champions who can lead change using both the SMA and KTA frameworks, a need for a defined set of champion competencies emerged.

Foundations for the competencies framework

Despite their recognised importance, the competencies required for champions to successfully drive EBP are most often described implicitly within broader discussions of roles, contextual factors and facilitation processes, rather than being systematically articulated, operationalised or translated into measurable frameworks or assessment tools.[5 7–9 11] Identifying and organising competencies into a clear competencies framework aligns champions' roles with organisational goals, clarifies performance expectations and guides curriculum development, all fostering professional growth.[5 17] In this paper, we define competencies as the core knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours necessary for champions to drive EBP within their organisations.[17–19]

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to describe the development of a competencies framework designed to guide curriculum and training for champions implementing and sustaining EBP. Using a multiphase approach, we identified seven core competencies, associated performance statements and a self-assessment tool. This framework will be used globally within the nursing association's BPCN programme to define the champion role, inform and standardise training, support self-assessment and capacity building and enable champions to drive sustained improvements in healthcare.

METHODS

Phase I: review of grey literature

To begin understanding who champions are and what their role is in implementation science, the Leading Change Toolkit[20] and *Transforming Nursing Through Knowledge*[7] were reviewed. *Transforming Nursing Through Knowledge* was selected because it provides a comprehensive description of the BPCN and associated programmes, offering critical insight into how champions are conceptualised and operationalised in practice. The *Leading Change Toolkit* was reviewed because it translates this conceptualisation into applied guidance for champions, explicitly aligning their role with the SMA and KTA frameworks to support evidence-informed change.[14–16] Content that explored the roles, responsibilities, knowledge and skills of champions was identified and contributed to the development of the search strategy for the scoping review (see below).

Phase II: scoping review

A scoping review methodology was chosen to explore peer-reviewed literature and identify the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours of EBP champions. The methodology followed Arksey & O'Malley's framework,[21] as advanced by Levac *et al*,[22] which includes six steps: (1) identifying the research question; (2) identifying relevant studies; (3) selecting studies; (4) charting the data; (5) collating and reporting the results and (6) consulting with external partners. Reporting follows the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) extension for Scoping Reviews checklist.[23] No protocol was registered for this review.

Identifying the research question

The research question was identified and developed in consultation with a team of implementation science specialists (ISS). The question posed was 'What core competencies are essential for champions to effectively drive the implementation of EBP changes as change agents?'

Identifying the relevant studies

The search strategy for the scoping review was developed by an ISS, in collaboration with two senior ISS with expertise in coaching champions, implementing BPGs and facilitating knowledge transfer. A health science librarian at an academic hospital partnered in refining the final search. Studies published between 1 January 2010 and 28 March 2025 were searched in Cochrane, CDSR, CINAHL, Embase, ePub, MEDLINE and PsycINFO using Boolean keywords and MeSH terms. Search terms covered three concepts: (1) champions and change agents; (2) knowledge translation, knowledge-to-action and social movement action and (3) competencies (see online supplemental appendix B for full search strategy and terms).

Selecting the relevant studies

Studies included in the scoping review were (1) primary studies, scoping reviews and systematic reviews published in English from 2010 onwards; (2) relevant to champions in any health or social service setting and sector; (3) relevant to the scope of a nurse champion (ie, registered nurse, registered practical nurse, nurse practitioner and nursing student) and (4) focused on actively implementing EBPs. Articles were excluded if they: (1) were not in English, (2) were not accessible for retrieval or (3) focused on the theory of knowledge translation and/or social movement, as opposed to practical application of the knowledge to action and/or social movement frameworks.

Three ISSs independently performed two levels of screening: (1) titles and abstracts were screened in DistillerSR (Evidence Partners, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada) for relevance and eligibility and (2) full-text articles were retrieved and reviewed. Disagreements at each level were resolved by consensus.

Charting the data

A standardised data charting form was developed using MS Excel (Microsoft Corp, Redmond, Washington, USA). Articles that met the eligibility criteria were divided among five ISSs, who extracted and documented the relevant data. To ensure accuracy and completeness, one ISS verified all data entries. Extracted information included the following elements: author and year of publication, type of study design, country of publication, sector the research occurred in, purpose/aim of the study, important definitions, who the champions were and what their role was within the organisation, the main findings of the study and what competencies the champions demonstrated, as well as a column for any additional comments/questions.

Collating, summarising and reporting the results

An inductive approach was used to identify and summarise themes from the included articles. The five ISSs independently reviewed the Excel spreadsheet and generated broad domains of champion competencies based on the activities and roles described. These domains were discussed, refined and consolidated until consensus was reached on the final set of themes.

While previous literature has categorised champion characteristics using transformational leadership theory,[24] this review identified important conceptual divergences that warranted the use of an alternative framework. Specifically, although transformational leadership emphasises vision, inspiration and influence, it does not fully capture the grassroots, relational and collective dynamics through which champions often operate to create sustainable change.[15 16 24] Therefore, to guide the categorisation and interpretation of champion competencies, the SMA framework was used due to its explicit focus on people-led, bottom-up change and collective action characteristics that closely reflect how champions enact change in practice.[15 16] During analysis, extracted champion knowledge, skills, attitudes and activities were examined in relation to SMA constructs (eg, framing, mobilising peers and forming collective identity). This analytic approach supported the development of a competencies framework that extends beyond traditional leadership models by foregrounding how champions generate momentum for change through social and relational processes.[15 16]

Consultation with external partners

Seven virtual focus group discussions were held to gather additional insights from 27 champions from the BPCN representing both local and international perspectives. These discussions, facilitated by three ISSs, focused on core competencies required to drive EBP changes in their respective settings and contributed to strengthening the findings and development of the Champions' Competencies Framework. Specifically, participants were asked questions such as what they thought it meant to be a champion, what they believed differentiated champions from others in their organisation and what best describes a champion. Themes were derived and used to further refine and confirm findings of the Champions' Competencies Framework.

Phase III: development of a Champions' Competencies Framework

The Champions' Competencies Framework and associated performance statements were developed by triangulating data from (1) review of grey literature; (2) scoping review and (3) consultation with external partners and reflect the core areas of knowledge, skills,

attitudes and behaviours for champions to effectively lead EBP change initiatives.

RESULTS

In this section, we describe the results of the scoping review and how, in combination with external consultation, the findings informed the development of the Champions' Competencies Framework, the primary contribution of this work.

Scoping review

Characteristics of the included studies

An original search was conducted in September 2021, with two updates conducted in April 2024 and March 2025 (see online supplemental appendix C for the PRISMA diagram and appendices D and F for details of the included studies). All study designs and settings were included; however, most articles focused on champions in hospital or acute care settings (n=34) and used a qualitative design (n=23). Other study designs included quantitative (n=5), descriptive (n=6), mixed-method studies (n=6), integrative review (n=1), systematic review (n=2), scoping review (n=3), case report studies (n=3), case series (n=3), cross-sectional studies (n=2), appreciative inquiry (n=1), intervention studies (n=2) and dissertations (n=4).

Studies were mostly conducted in the USA (n=27) and Canada (n=12) (see online supplemental appendix D). All 63 articles were screened and thematically analysed by the authors. Champions varied across the included studies but typically were nurses in varying roles (27), physicians (6), occupational therapists (3), social workers (2) and a health worker in a management role (1). 29 studies mentioned an interprofessional team of champions.

Knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes of champions described in the literature

Champions were largely identified as change agents who actively engage in change initiatives and promote EBP. All included studies focused on or described the knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes that champions possess. An initial list of 12 competencies was drafted, but through revision and consultation, seven core unique competencies for champions were identified.

Knowledge of the practice area and understanding of the context

44 studies identified champions as having the knowledge and expertise of the subject matter, practice area, identified problem/opportunity, or change process.[5 9 10 12 23 25–60] This contributes to their credibility[61] and ability to be educators and facilitators.[12 23 25–39] They can also support others in identifying knowledge gaps within their practice environment and subsequently train and support colleagues to address those gaps and needs.[40 41] Champion's knowledge and expertise extend to their local context to understand and appreciate the social, political and organisational context where change will occur.[11 37 42]

Build and maintain relationships

34 studies identified champions as collaborators who are skilled in building and maintaining relationships.[9 11 12 23 33 34 36 38–40 43 44 50 51 55 57–59 62–68] They act as 'boundary spanners' across groups of individuals,[11 43] creating a network of connections they can draw upon when needed and engaging in outward-facing activities to foster the active engagement of internal and external partners. Champions work collaboratively with others to build coordinated and collective action.[44]

Mentor, support and role model

27 articles described champions as consultants or supportive individuals whom others seek guidance from.[11 23 25 27–32 35 37 39 42 46 48 50 52 53 55–60 66 69 70] They engage in various activities, including mentoring,[23 24 48 68 71] one-to-one bedside coaching,[27] just-in-time teaching[30] and providing resources so staff can problem-solve challenges.[31 32] Additionally, champions were identified as evidence-based peer role models[35 39 46] demonstrating and reinforcing new practices through their own behaviour.

Visionary leadership and advocate

22 articles identified champions as visionary leaders who advocate for change.[9 11 12 25 26 32 35 38–40 42 44 46 50 57 62 64–67 71–74] They lead practice changes, influence others to join the initiative and build capacity among their peers.[11 44] These champions are curious, possess a genuine spirit of inquiry, challenge the status quo[19 24] and are willing to confront obstacles and take risks.[50]

Communicate to foster a shared understanding

29 articles identified champions as powerful communicators who inspire, encourage and influence others to engage in change.[9 11 23–25 30 32–34 39 41 43 45 48 51–53 61 62 66 67 69 71–77] While visionary leaders set direction, this category emphasises articulation and framing to translate goals and tailor messages that resonate with diverse partners, professional groups and contexts.[8 9] Rather than primarily influencing others *that* change is necessary (as in advocacy), communicative champions focus on helping others understand *how* and *why* change unfolds in practice.[11 49] In doing so, they foster trust, enabling teams to engage with change not as a top-down mandate, but as a collectively shared process that builds shared understanding and sustained engagement.[11 49]

Project manage implementation activities

33 articles identified champions as process-oriented individuals who plan for change,[31 51 69 71 77–80] operationalising change initiatives and guiding implementation activities.[9 11 12 23 27–36 38–40 43 44 46 48 52–54 56–59 69 81] They develop and share ideas[81] and ensure that implementation

activities are accurately being followed.[52] Champions also conduct regular check-ins to identify and address any barriers or challenges to implementation.[34]

Assess, evaluate and monitor the impact of the change initiative

16 articles found that champions monitor projects[11] to understand the impact of change initiatives.[11 12 26 28–35 37 40 43 52 57] This includes overseeing data collection and audits,[33] reporting the results to staff,[32] and providing feedback using the data to plan, adjust or monitor the status of implementation activities.[43]

Champions' Competencies Framework

Findings from the scoping review, together with internal and external consultation, led to the identification of core competencies for champions and informed the development of a comprehensive Champions' Competencies Framework within the BPCN programme. This framework delineates seven key competency domains: leader, advocate, collaborator, communicator, content and context expert, facilitator and mentor. Each domain is operationalised through specific performance statements that illustrate progressive proficiency. In total, 34 performance statements were identified (see online supplemental appendix E for the full framework). This framework and its performance statements provide a structured and actionable approach for champions to develop, strengthen and assess their capabilities and for organisations to align education and support with the competencies required to initiate, implement and sustain EBP initiatives.

Description of competency domains

In table 1 below, we present a brief description of each competency domain identified for champions, with further interpretation in the Discussion section.

DISCUSSION

Through a review of the nursing association's grey literature, a scoping review and consultation with external partners, the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours of champions were identified. These informed our proposed competency framework to prepare champions to optimise their roles and facilitate the successful implementation of EBP.

Prior research has characterised champions using transformational leadership theory,[24] which emphasises *individual* attributes and behaviours, such as inspirational motivation, idealised influence, individualised consideration and intellectual stimulation that enable champions to motivate and influence others to adopt EBP.[24] In contrast, the Champions' Competencies Framework positions champions as embedded change agents who mobilise collective, people-led *social* processes to implement and sustain EBP. Drawing on SMA and KTA, it shifts from leader-centric influence to shared ownership of change, operationalising the relational, contextual and practical work required for champions to enact and sustain change within complex health and social service systems. Leadership is not the primary lens in this framework but rather an interrelated competency domain.

Champions' Competencies Framework

The framework conceptualises champions as change agents who can intentionally build capacity across key competency domains to increase their effectiveness in translating evidence into sustained practice change. These competencies are positioned as dynamic and developable, shaping how champions engage with complexity and mobilise social processes within healthcare systems. Together, these domains operationalise how champions enact practice change in real-world settings and provide a structure for the 34 performance statements (online supplemental appendix E).

Table 1 Description of each competency in the Champions' Competencies Framework

Competency domain	Description
Leader	Reflects champions' capacity to guide the overall direction of practice change through both formal and informal influence.[12 17 20 65]
Advocate	Captures champions' strong commitment to best practices, actively speaking out in support of EBP and mobilising others to prioritise and uphold change.[11 38 71]
Collaborator	Emphasises champions' ability to build and maintain relationships across professional and organisational boundaries, enabling collective ownership and coordinated action for practice change.[11 44]
Communicator	Reflects champions' capacity to convey the purpose, relevance, and progress of EBP change initiatives through tailored messaging to engage diverse internal and external partners.[11 44]
Content and Context Expert	This competency is twofold. First, it reflects champions' integration of subject-matter knowledge and pragmatic evidence related to change management.[42 71] Second, it captures a deeper and more nuanced understanding of local organisational environments and cultures, enabling champions to adapt implementation approaches accordingly.[11 36 37 42]
Facilitator	Represents a champions' skillset and role in operationalising change by coordinating activities, supporting teams through implementation tasks, and addressing practice barriers as they arise.[52 69 71 81]
Mentor	Captures champions' role in developing others' capacity for change by providing guidance, coaching, and role modelling to build skills and confidence in implementing best practices.[7 35 46 61]

EBP, evidence-based practice.

Champions as leaders

Leadership emerged as a critical competency for champions. Champions may exercise leadership through both formal roles and informal peer influence, underscoring that champions operate across disciplines and roles rather than within hierarchical boundaries alone.[11 16 62 71] In this context, leadership functions as an enabling competency through which champions mobilise others strategically. Building capacity in leadership ensures champions can take decisive action to engage internal and external partners, overcome barriers and implement EBP effectively.[11 16 62] A performance statement champions can use to assess this competency is whether they actively embrace, guide and participate in practice change with enthusiasm to drive transformation forward.

Champions as advocates

Advocacy within the champion role operates as a competency in the form of motivational work, shaping how EBP is understood, valued and prioritised in organisations.[11 38 71] Aligned with the SMA framework, advocacy supports sustainable change by fostering intrinsic motivation and shared purpose rather than relying solely on authority or compliance.[15 16] Champions' capacity to strategically frame key messages—reflected in performance statements related to advocacy development—supports the growth of advocacy as a practice, allowing champions to generate the influence and organisational support needed for sustained practice change.

Champions as collaborators

Collaboration is a key competency that highlights the relational aspect of a champion's role. It emphasises that effective implementation is fundamentally social rather than technical. Champions act as 'boundary spanners', building and maintaining relationships with various internal and external partners, promoting a sense of collective identity.[11 44] Rather than acting independently, champions leverage relationships to create shared ownership of change, foster inclusivity and engage others in a coordinated and collective effort to implement EBP. The collaborator role therefore is crucial for creating a supportive network and mobilising resources needed for successful implementation.[82] Specific performance statements include promoting inclusivity and diversity within the team, supporting social connection and engaging in activities to build relationships with others.

Champions as communicators

The ability to communicate effectively is identified as a fundamental competency for champions. Champions have the power to shape the meaning of change initiatives rather than exchange information alone. To do so successfully, champions must communicate the vision and value of EBP, using persuasive, dynamic and strategic messaging to inspire and engage others.[11 47 48 71] They must also build competence in using various media sources to raise awareness and generate momentum, in line with the principles outlined in both the SMA and KTA frameworks.[14–16] This competency ensures that champions can foster a shared understanding and maintain ongoing engagement throughout the change process. For example, to mobilise change, the shared concern needs to be strategically framed and understood by individuals, groups and/or organisations. A scoping review conducted by Ferren *et al*[45] and the principles of the SMA framework[16 17] emphasise that champions must develop strong communication skills to build momentum and increase public visibility for change initiatives, thereby facilitating the implementation process.[15 16 45]

Champions as content and context experts

The dual emphasis on content and context expertise underscores the need for champions to develop a pragmatic understanding of EBP within their area of focus, alongside the capacity to discern when, how and why adaptation is necessary without compromising core EBP principles.[42 71] Equally critical is their ability to understand and navigate the unique sociohistorical, political and organisational contexts of their settings.[11 36 37 42] Together, this dual expertise enables champions to tailor change initiatives to the specific needs of their environment, aligning with findings from Dogherty *et al*[83] and Ploeg *et al*[37] that highlight contextual awareness as central to meaningful and sustainable change. Reflected in performance statements related to local adaptation, this positioning reinforces the importance of champions not only as content experts but also as culturally aware agents capable of navigating a complex healthcare system.

Champions as facilitators

Facilitation reflects champions' capacity to translate strategic intent into coordinated action within complex change environments.[82] This may include gaining experience and expertise in project management skills, co-creating action plans and using facilitation techniques to ensure active participation from all partners.[52 69 71 81] This competency and the accompanying performance statements encourage champions to build capacity to operationalise complex change processes, navigate challenges and maintain momentum for EBP implementation.

Champions as mentors

Mentorship reflects champions' capacity to extend their impact by developing their peers' ability to lead and sustain change through guidance, support and coaching.[7 35 46 61] Performance indicators associated with this domain highlight mentorship as an active process of capacity-building rather than passive support.[23 35 39 46] By mentoring others, champions can

build leadership capacity within their teams and inspire future change agents. This competency emphasises the importance of role modelling and fostering a culture of continuous learning and development, ensuring the sustainability of EBP initiatives.[15 16] Through mentorship, champions cultivate confidence, leadership skills and a shared sense of responsibility for improvement among peers and change teams.[27 38 42 49] Framed in this way, mentorship becomes a mechanism for embedding EBP within organisational culture by fostering continuous learning and building future change capacity, thereby strengthening the sustainability of initiatives.[16 17]

Implications and contributions to practice

The development of the Champions' competencies framework to guide EBP has several implications for practice, education and research. First, the framework provides a comprehensive guide defining seven essential competencies and a clearer roadmap for how champions can effectively drive and sustain EBP initiatives. This is important because within the BPCN, champions are encouraged to use the self-assessment tool developed alongside the framework to evaluate themselves on each performance statement using an adapted version of Benner's Stages of Competence,[84] a novice-to-expert assessment. This provides a structured and measurable approach for champion learners to monitor their development, identify opportunities for growth and more clearly articulate and refine their role within implementation initiatives.

Second, integrating the Champions' Competencies Framework into the BPCN programme creates a competency-based curriculum where learning objectives align with building capacity in key competencies and accompanying performance statements. This aligns with research that supports having clearly defined roles and comprehensive training to enhance the effectiveness of champions and empower them to promote and implement EBP.[5 8] Moreover, structured learning opportunities focused on building competence and confidence ensure that champions are prepared to implement EBP and engage effectively with interprofessional teams in diverse global health and social service settings.

Limitations

Several limitations should be noted. First, given this was a scoping review, a formal quality appraisal of included studies was not undertaken, which may influence the strength of inferences drawn from individual sources. Second, terminology describing individuals who support implementation varies across settings, disciplines and regions. Although multiple terms may refer to similar functions (eg, champions, opinion leaders, facilitators, linking agents, change agents, coaches and knowledge brokers), the search strategy prioritised terms most commonly used in interprofessional healthcare teams and in the context of the BPCN (ie, champion(s), change agent(s), steering committee(s) and change team(s)). As a result, terminology-related gaps may exist (ie, studies using alternate terminology may not have been retrieved); therefore, competencies may be missing in the framework. However, triangulation with grey literature and consultation with champions helped to mitigate this risk by identifying additional role expectations and refining domains; however, residual terminology-related gaps remain possible.

Finally, this work was undertaken to develop a framework for a global programme led by a nursing association, and much of the included literature describes champions in nursing and allied health contexts. The term champion may be used less frequently in some professional groups, even when comparable implementation functions are present. While terminology may differ across disciplines, the competency domains and performance statements are role-based and are intended to be transferable across health and social service settings. Further validation in non-nursing contexts would strengthen confidence in generalisability and support broader uptake.

CONCLUSION

This paper provides a comprehensive synthesis of competencies associated with champions in health and social service settings and proposes a structured Champions' Competencies Framework to support their development as implementation-focused change agents. To our knowledge, this is among the first efforts to consolidate champion competencies into a set of competency domains with operationalised performance statements that can be used for self-assessment, capacity-building and organisational support.

This review lays the groundwork for future research and practical applications, with the potential to create a lasting global impact through the BPCN. Our team plans to integrate a structured evaluation strategy within the Champions training programme to assess the impact of the education and training on champions' competence and confidence to influence practice changes within their organisation. Findings from this evaluation will be reported in a subsequent paper, focused on validating the framework and examining its utility as both a developmental and evaluative tool. Together, this work will contribute to advancing methodological rigour in how champions are trained, supported and studied within implementation science.

Contributors HP is the guarantor. HP and GZ conceptualised the manuscript. GZ and HP were responsible for the methodology. GZ completed the search and GZ, HP, PJ and KW did the formal analysis of results. HP, GZ, PJ, KW and

SM validated the results. HP and GZ wrote the original draft. DG contributed to conceptualising the project and writing the final article. All authors had full access to all the data in the study and had final responsibility for the decision to submit for publication. The final version of the manuscript was approved by all authors.

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