Table 5: The external facilitator role in communication and formative use of data: potential activities/behaviors per QUERI experiences

1) Communication activities/behaviors
    a) Provides a basis for regular, goal-focused contact.
        i) Establishes multiple means of one-way and two-way communication with ICA/s [internal change agent/s]: e.g., e-mail; phone conferences, discussion groups, phone contact information, and a problem-focused newsletter.
        ii) Obtains information to keep the QUERI team updated.
    b) Provides clarity and an information source for the ICAs:
        i) Shares knowledge regarding QUERI implementation interventions,
        ii) Shares knowledge regarding the VA system, and
        iii) Shares knowledge regarding change processes.
    c) Structures and leads regular communication across study sites regarding, e.g.:
        i) Status of implementation efforts,
        ii) Successful problem solving approaches for various issues, and
        iii) Similar roles and problems.
    d) Establishes linkages for ICA problem-related actions:
        i) Helps them frame questions to ask of key resources.
    e) Intercedes with VA leadership (internal or external) on behalf of ICA.
2) Formative use of data activities/behaviors
        i) Reviews diagnostic information in order to understand the local context.
        ii) Monitors/tracks and uses progress data:
            (1) For example, regarding goals and both intermediate and end result outcomes.
        iii) Monitors/tracks and uses problem data:
            (1) For example, regarding issues/barriers.
        iv) Monitors ICA activities to know what is happening:
            (1) Monitors use of new solutions for site problems, and
            (2) Identifies needs and issues of an ICA.
        v) Monitors and uses data re: the value of and need for external facilitation.

facilitators tried to establish a means of regular, goal-focused contact and became a resource and boundary spanner [3,6] for ongoing information exchange or networking. As individual participants said, "*If the opinion leaders needed input from* [another research team member], *they went through the facilitator*"; "*I could tell them how other sites did it – give them information about solving problems*"; and "*Sometimes I could put them in contact with other clinics that were doing well ...* [and] *I collected protocol books from all the clinics, put them together, and shared it across clinics so*

they could decide what to do." Such communication activities appeared to indirectly assist sites to solve problems and to provide mechanisms for moral support among internal change agent peers.

Support

One interviewee described the essence of facilitation as "*support and encouragement – more of a relationship where you work with the team or identified person at the site, rather than an outsider coming in with educational materials.*" Other

Table 6: The external facilitator role in a supportive relationship: potential activities/behaviors per QUERI experiences

Establishing and maintaining a supportive relationship:
    a) Maintains multiple means of contact and accessibility with the ICA.
    b) Provides rapid responses to ICA requests, as feasible.
    c) Provides reassurance and encouragement:
        i) Provides information on progress,
        ii) Provides cheerleading,
        iii) Provides psychological support, and
        iv) Enables peer-based social support.
    d) Empowers ICAs – sets the stage for them, gives them permission to do things on their own.
    e) Serves as a "nudge" and a source of external expectation for progress.
    f) Makes required actions quick and easy, when possible.
    g) Mentors and develops skills in the ICA, as needed:
        i) Shares knowledge,
        ii) Teaches skills,
        iii) Enables ICAs to solve their own problems, where feasible, and
        iv) Provides role feedback.