

Integrating Evidence Into Health Policy: Navigating Cross-Sector and Interdisciplinary Collaboration

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Abstract : The following proposal pertains to the complex process of successfully implementing health policies that are based on public health research. A systematic review was conducted by myself and faculty at the Cluj School of Public Health in Romania. The reviewed articles covered a wide range of topics, such as barriers and facilitators to multi-sector collaboration, differences in professional cultures, and systemic obstacles. The reviewed literature identified communication, collaboration, user-friendly dissemination, and documentation of processes in the execution of applied research as important themes for the promotion of evidence in the public health decision-making process. This proposal fits into the Academy Health National Health Policy conference because it identifies and examines differences between the worlds of research and politics. Implications and new insights for federal and/or state health policy: Recommendations made based on the findings of this research include using politically relevant levers to promote research (e.g. campaign donors, lobbies, established parties, etc.), modernizing dissemination practices, and reforms in which the involvement of external stakeholders is facilitated without relying on invitations from individual policy makers. Description of how evidence and/or data was or could be used: The reviewed articles illustrated shortcomings and areas for improvement in policy research processes and collaborative development. In general, the evidence base in the field of integrating research into policy lacks critical details of the actual process of developing evidence based policy. This shortcoming in logistical details creates a barrier for potential replication of collaborative efforts described in studies. Potential impact of the presentation for health policy: The reviewed articles focused on identifying barriers and facilitators that arise in cross sector collaboration, rather than the process and impact of integrating evidence into policy. In addition, the type of evidence used in policy was rarely specified, and widely varying interpretations of the definition of evidence complicated overall conclusions. Background: Using evidence to inform public health decision making processes has been proven effective; however, it is not clear how research is applied in practice. Aims: The objectives of the current study were to assess the extent to which evidence is used in public health decision-making process. Methods: To identify eligible studies, seven bibliographic databases, specifically, PubMed, Scopus, Cochrane Library, Science Direct, Web of Science, ClinicalKey, Health and Safety Science Abstract were screened (search dates: 1990 - September 2015); a general internet search was also conducted. Primary research and systematic reviews about the use of evidence in public health policy in Europe were included. The studies considered for inclusion were assessed by two reviewers, along with extracted data on objective, methods, population, and results. Data were synthesized as a narrative review. Results: Of 2564 articles initially identified, 2525 titles and abstracts were screened. Ultimately, 30 articles fit the research criteria by describing how or why evidence is used/not used in public health policy. The majority of included studies involved interviews and surveys (N=17). Study participants were policy makers, health care professionals, researchers, community members, service users, experts in public health.

Keywords : cross-sector, dissemination, health policy, policy implementation

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