

**How could research influence
public policy?**

or

**Why doesn't research influence
public policy more often?**

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- **Consensus workshops to consider what evidence policy-makers need? What is good “evidence”? How should the evidence be synthesised?**
- **Assemble & disseminate evidence from existing sources on “what works”**
- **Carry out new syntheses on non-health care policies that influence PH**

Policy-makers views on evidence to address health inequalities

- What sort of evidence do you/ministers/senior colleagues find convincing?
- How can existing evidence be improved?
- How can researchers help users of evidence?

Petticrew et al, 2004

Do we have....?

Evidence-free policy?

Yes, but “doing nothing is not an option”

Policy-free research?

“Policy-free evidence is common: many researchers do not see it as their responsibility to think through the policy implications of their work - they need to move beyond preaching to other researchers”

Do we have....?

Fig-leaf research evidence?

An Inverse Evidence law?

Pragmatic considerations in policy-making

“Doing nothing is not an option”

“Researchers are preoccupied with controlling for bias, but the customers aren't interested in the details...they just want to know what works”

“Stories themselves can be used in a credible way along with the evidence”

How can policy relevance to inequalities in health be enhanced?

- Need for evaluations of effectiveness with equity dimension
- Predictive research on “best buys”
- Methodological research on assessing clusters of interventions (policy systems)
- “Mixed economy” of evidence
- Need for studies based on plausible causal pathways

Researchers' views on evidence to address health inequalities

- Examples of research evidence that has had an impact on policy around health inequalities?
- Nature and location of such evidence?
- What constitutes good evidence for this issue?

Whitehead et al, 2004

Types of high impact evidence

- **Observational studies**
- **Politically timely household/case studies**
- **Controlled evaluations**
- **Natural experiments**
- **Historical evidence with a long shelf-life**

Suggestions for improving the availability of these types of evidence

1. Nurturing an evaluation culture

- “Evaluation has to be planned from the beginning - researchers should not just be told to evaluate programmes already in place”**
- Tackling funding and research assessment bias**
- Training in evaluation and research synthesis methods**

Suggestions for improving the availability of these types of evidence

2. Closer engagement between research and policy

“The earlier you bring policy-makers into the evaluation process, the better the outcome...”

“We need guidelines for gold standard research commissioning”

Suggestions for improving the availability of these types of evidence

3. Assembling the “evidence jigsaw”

“We need evidence from different sources to make the [causal] links”

“ Piece together qualitative case studies with quantitative studies in order to flesh out and make personal connections with research..”

What now?

Broadening the evidence base around:

- **Pathways leading to inequalities**
- **Managing change/implementation**
- **What works and how to make things work better**
- **Learning from what has not worked**
- **Promoting multi-faceted approaches to all this**