



Symposium 8 – 2018 Nordic Implementation Conference

Narrowing the research-policy gap through collaboration: lessons learned from the social welfare sector

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Background

Evidence-based practice (EBP) is increasingly emphasized across a broad range of health- and social welfare areas. However, ensuring research utilization – particularly systematic reviews – towards development is often problematic, with challenges found with both transfer and uptake of academic research in policy contexts. On the demand side, policy makers sometimes lack capacity to access and use research. On the supply side, researchers may fail effectively to communicate relevant research to policy makers. Additionally, research teams and policy makers are often inadequately connected. To narrow the research-policy gap, relationships and collaborations have been proposed as key strategies. It can take many forms, ranging from nominal collaboration to true partnerships. However, there is limited knowledge concerning the optimal linkages between academic and policy worlds, and no agreement on how this is done in practice and how it is best promoted.

Aim

The aim of this panel discussion is to describe the collaborations established between research teams and policymakers in the Nordic countries. In a panel format, we will share experiences and strategies to improve the production and uptake of evidence in social welfare policy, addressing the questions: 1) what are the structures of collaboration towards utilizing research in policy making, 2) which main factors (barriers and facilitators) impact the collaborations, 3) what are the strategies that are used to strengthen the research-policy linkages.

Process and content

The panel will be collaborative with time shared among the panel members. Each panel member will first present their experiences and first-hand knowledge of narrowing the research-policy gap, highlighting examples leading to real change. The final part of the session will include a question and answer session whereby the audience is invited to post questions which panel members will answer.

Conclusions/Discussion

Narrowing the research-policy gap, and ensuring use of policy-relevant reviews and other research in the health- and social welfare areas, can be achieved through close collaboration between academic and policy worlds. The panel will show that such collaborations require adaptations on both sides of the research-policy gap. We will discuss how it may involve reciprocal participation in working groups, serving as advisory group members, and tailored reviews. We invite the audience to join us in furthering our understanding of how ensuring research utilisation can be accomplished through collaborative connections.