Workshop 13 – 2018 Nordic Implementation Conference
Implementation at the Interface between Evidence and Policy

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Presentation 1: Evidence to policy: A review of theories & frameworks for health evidence-policy interrelations (Nicole Votruba).

Background

Mental illness is one of the most pressing health challenges of our time, yet, despite striking evidence and cross-cutting issues, it does not rank high on policy agendas. Theories on evidence-policy interrelations can help understand why and how mental health could gain traction. Numerous frameworks from the health context exist, but current theories lack applicability and translational impact.

Project aim

The aim of this theory literature review was to review existing theories, frameworks and models on interrelationships of research evidence and policy-making, political decision-making and agenda setting, and to identify suitable frameworks that can be applied to mental health evidence translation into policy in low and middle income countries (LMICs).

Project methods

A systematically approached theory review has been performed, led by the BeHeMoth framework (Booth & Carroll 2015). Nine databases have been searched, abstracts (n = 8869) screened, and full-text records (n = 68) have been reviewed, which complied with the inclusion criteria: Articles presenting a theory/conceptual framework/model on evidence and policy interrelationships; with a health policy focus; in English. Additional records were identified through other sources (n = 100+ (in progress)) and reviewed. A qualitative synthesis of the literature has been performed.

Project results

The paper is in writing up to be finished in 2017. Preliminary results: A range of theories, conceptual frameworks and tools on evidence-policy interrelationships were identified, applicable to the health context, yet varying in depth, breadth and applicability. Wider theories explain general phenomena and principles, but lack practical guidance. Several frameworks are available, differing in the elements of focus of the evidence-policy process, in quality and explanatory depth. Few frameworks provide applicable guidance to strengthen health policy-science linkages for stakeholders in LMICs.

Preliminary or final conclusions/discussion

Theories and frameworks on evidence-policy interrelations vary in aim, focus and context. Few theories have been applied and empirically tested. This review identified two (tbc!) frameworks that provide sufficient methodological rigour, and are most suitable and applicable to the context of LMICs and mental health. In a next step of this research project, these frameworks will be applied to a case study of evidence-policy interrelationships in a LMIC setting, to test theory against evidence.

Presentation 2: EVIPNet Europe building knowledge translation capacity in the WHO European Region (Tanja Kuchenmüller)

Background

The Evidence-informed Policy Network in the WHO European Region (EVIPNet Europe) is a key implementation pillar of the European Health Information Initiative (EHII), which is committed to improving the uptake of evidence and information that underpins health policy.

Project aim

WHO Secretariat of EVIPNet Europe sits within the Division of Information, Evidence, Research and Innovation (DIR), unit of Knowledge Management, Evidence and Research for Policy-making (KER) at the WHO European Region for Europe. Its main goal is to increase country capacity to develop evidence-informed policies on health system priorities. It envisions a world in which policy-makers and other stakeholders in low- and middle-income countries use the best available local and global research evidence to inform policy-making (EIP).

Project methods

EVIPNet Europe is a knowledge translation (KT) network that endeavours to reduce inequities within the Region by increasing the systematic use of the best available scientific evidence to guide health system policy development. It does this by applying two of the core Health 2020 principles – i.e., whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches – while functioning as an impartial knowledge broker between health policy-makers, researchers and civil society to promote cross-society, multi-stakeholder partnerships through the development of KT platforms.

Project results

EVIPNet Europe has expanded rapidly since its launch in 2012; it now includes 21 member countries. The network has provided regular EIP training opportunities, made tools accessible, fostered peer-learning and provided technical assistance that enable countries to implement effective KT activities. As a result, many network members have conducted situation analyses to gain an understanding of their EIP context and draw a baseline; developed policy-relevant syntheses of the best available global and local evidence; and conducted policy dialogues, which supplement available evidence with stakeholders' views and tacit knowledge. These activities have brought the research and policy communities closer, allowing for greater evidence uptake.

Preliminary or final conclusions/discussion

The network continues to play an important role in the Region, with further expansion expected in the coming years in the light of growing interest from countries in the western and southern parts of Region, who are keen to participate.