Developments in Research Transformation
Department of Health Perspective

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Overview

- The context: the different cultures and agendas of policy makers and researchers
- The perspective and experience of the Department of Health in:
  - Setting research priorities
  - Encouraging the transfer of research findings into policy and practice
- Strategic Health Research Program
- What this means for researchers and policy makers/practitioners
Role of research in the health system

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<tr>
<th>Research can inform</th>
<th>Policy what should happen and why?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Research can inform</td>
<td>Planning How and where should it happen?</td>
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<td>Research can inform</td>
<td>Provision What happens?</td>
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<td>Research can inform</td>
<td>Performance Did it work?</td>
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Source: adapted from AIHW April 2001 'From the inside, watching the e's and q's' ACCESS 7:15

Perspectives on the researcher/policymaker/practitioner gap (from the consultation on the Research Transfer discussion paper)

- policymaker views of research
- researcher views of policymakers and practitioners

Summary:
- There are different interests and pressures on researchers, funders, policy makers and practitioners

And the challenge is:
- how to manage these different interests to promote research transfer/transformation?
Advancing research transformation

So the question is...

• how can researchers/policy makers/practitioners work together to get the right evidence (where it exists) in the right way to the right people at the right time in the right places?

However:

• There is a limited understanding of how to make this happen (here and internationally)
• and the use of evidence on effective policy and practice is complex.

What do National and International Trends tell us?

• There is a growing focus on research priorities and research transfer, including linkage and exchange models in an attempt to address these questions.
• Setting research priorities
• A role for applied priority/user driven research
• The important role of investigator driven research
Lessons from the DHS Social Research Agenda & Research Program

• Too many priorities – no longer a priority agenda but a “catch all”
• Questions were not easily translated into readily useable questions for researchers
• Individual studies are unlikely to/or have limited impact on policy and practice

Understanding Our Decision Making Environments

• End users of research have different needs in policy and clinical areas, and these needs determine the weightings they place in:
  – decision making on evidence
  – and on other contextual issues, such as values, organisational culture, community views, political sensitivity etc.

• Social and policy research users place more emphasis on contextual issues when considering evidence. Policies are evidence informed. Research is often about understanding the issues eg what policy emphasis/approach should we take – healthy weight or obesity?

• Clinical research users place more emphasis on context free evidence usually derived from basic research eg drug trials or research which responds to the “what works” questions. Eg what are the most effective clinical interventions for diabetes?
Taking a systematic approach to Research Transformation - Starting from the End

Users Needs

- Research users include health system managers, policy makers, clinicians/practitioners, consumers/communities
- Users have specific knowledge about system/policy issues, health experiences, cultural issues etc
- Their involvement increases the likelihood that:
  - that research undertakings are meaningful and relevant
  - they will have ownership of and thus apply the research findings
- However, they do not usually have the capacity to translate policy/practice problems or themes into researchable research questions

Department of Health Responses

- Currently identifying research priorities and research questions for longer term commissioned research
- Adopting a research synthesis approach to draw together research findings on key policy/intervention problems
- Revising the Research Program
- Developing Research Transformation Framework
- Revising the Research Framework
- Conducting research seminars
- Research literacy training
- Research capacity building strategies
Frameworks for research priority setting

- DH & region policy architecture & authorisation process (being developed)
- South Australia’s Strategic Plan
- Department of Health Strategic Directions
- Health reform agenda

Research priorities for the Strategic Health Research Program

**SA Strategic Plan – Health Targets:**
- Healthy Life Expectancy (lead nation in 10 years)
- Infant Mortality (continue to be best performing State in Australia)
- Psychological Distress (equal or lower the Aust. average in 10 yrs)
- Smoking (reduce the percentage of young smokers by 10% in 10 years)
- Overweight (reduce the percentage of South Australians who are overweight /obese by 10% in 10 yrs)

& Additionally:
- Health Systems Research
Strategic Health Research Program (SHRP)

**Summary**

- Be innovative, take on new methodologies or work with those who have them, find new partners, work outside your comfort zone
- Network with practitioners and policy makers - start early and keep it up, involve research users in advisory committees
- Understand the importance of policy and the link between policy and practice
- Understand what funders want and recognise that this will change over time
- Provide research findings in relevant formats for end users
- Develop skills in collaboration and negotiation.
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