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

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

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While there is substantial demand for systematic and evidence-based public health policy,1,2 the process of translating public health research into policy remains underdeveloped. Using evidence to inform public health decision-making has been proven effective,2 but the current body of literature lacks detail about the role of research in actual legislative processes.1,3

This systematic review assesses the extent to which evidence is used in European public health decision-making practice, along with highlighting barriers and facilitators to developing and implementing evidence-based policy.

Methods

Two reviewers used terms including evidence-based, public health, policymaking, and Europe to search for articles across seven databases:

• PubMed
• ClinicalKey
• Health and Safety Science Abstract
• Web of Science
• Science Citation Index
• Scopus
• WoS Core Collection

Two reviewers searched through additional non-database sources (n = 2542) and added references from grey literature (n = 41). In total, 2525 records were identified (n = 22) through database searching. Records after duplicates removed (n = 2190) were assessed for eligibility (n = 71). The remaining 2119 are reviewed within this systematic review.

Results

Of the 30 studies examined in this review, the majority (n=17) reported analysis based on interviews and surveys which gathered input from diverse perspectives, including policymakers, researchers, public health experts, and community members. Healthcare professionals were also included in a minority of studies (n=10). One-third of studies (n=10) discussed the widely varying interpretations of the evidence by policymakers and researchers. In addition to illustrating fundamental differences between the professions of policy research and policymaking, this lack of consensus can hinder collaboration by generating tension. Study participants reported a range of sources used as evidence to inform policy, including

• Literature searches
• Observations
• Literature searches

The results of this review are specific to the European context and cannot be generalized to settings outside of Europe.

Study participants

Factors that Facilitate Evidence-based Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Facilitates Evidence-based Policy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>of and access to research</td>
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<td>availability and accessibility</td>
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<td>Availability and Accessibility*</td>
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Barriers to Generating Evidence-based Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Low Efficiency</th>
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<td>Limited Resources</td>
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Leaders

Researchers can build relationships with policymakers by including stakeholders throughout the research process, securing funding from nonprofit sources, publicly releasing outcomes, and gaining experience in politics to better understand application context and advance research literacy.

Implications

Researchers can increase the viability of evidence-based policy by streamlining reports for general audiences, publicizing findings outside academic circles, and starting research in databases that are publicly accessible and searchable.

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References