

Primary Health Care Policy

... What's evidence got to do with it?

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Both decision-makers and social scientists behave as though ... research makes a genuine contribution to public policy

Weiss & Weiss (1996)

Overview

- Context – primary care landscape
- Evidence-based initiatives
- Factors influencing uptake of research
- Future challenges

**– Context –
Primary health care**

Primary Care Strategic Goals

1. Getting the right workforce in the right place
2. Ensuring people see the health worker best placed to address their needs
3. Making best practice easy practice
4. Ensuring accountability, value and quality

Getting the right workforce in the right place

- Numbers – attract, recruit, retain
- Geographic distribution
- Appropriate mix of health workers
- Multidisciplinary teams



Seeing the right health worker

- Greater use of practice nurses, allied health workers, community services
- Appropriate use of expertise
- Delegation? Substitution?
- Sensitivities:
 - Professional boundaries
 - Quality and safety

Best practice = Easy practice

- Best practice knowledge gaps
- Evidence ≠ practice uptake
- Health care knowledge doubles every 5 years
 - How to keep up?
 - How to discriminate?
- Pragmatic research
- Creative dissemination



Ensuring Accountability, Quality, Value for Money

- Are our programs working or missing the mark?
- Who needs to know?
- What do we need to know?
- Accountability v. 'red tape'



Research Grounded in Reality

- Primarily Medicare fee-for-service
- Some blended payments, incentives
- Federated health system
- Political and community pressures



Evidence-based initiatives

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- Sharing Health Care Initiative
- Incentives for Practice Nurses



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Factors influencing uptake of research

Research Uptake Enablers

- ✓ **Personal contact**

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- ✓ **Anticipates policy needs**

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Future Challenges

Where to From Here?

- Plugging the gaps
 - Primary health care services provision
 - Health services organisation
 - Models of care – multidisciplinary teams
 - Real (or at least 'near') time data
- ... and reflects the realities of our health system

