

Conference abstract

Transferring research to policy and practice: quo vadis?

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Abstract

Introduction: Research findings are of little use if they are not used to help inform the development of policy and practice. A number of studies during the last decade have indicated the continued need to move more towards evidence-informed policy and practice, yet today there remains too little use of a common language or approach between the research and policy communities. Moreover, research that is undertaken may not be timely or relevant to the current policy making context. This presentation, therefore, will focus on the identification of barriers and facilitators to knowledge transfer to policy and practice, highlighting some examples of how knowledge transfer has been achieved.

Methods: A rapid review of literature of methods of knowledge transfer was undertaken to identify state of the art in mechanisms and approaches to bridging the gap between research and policy. Subsequently, selected policy documents and grey literature in the areas of services for older people and those with disabilities were scrutinised for exemplar mechanisms that have been used to help facilitate knowledge transfer in Europe and elsewhere.

Results: A number of different elements are key to forming successful approaches to knowledge transfer. These include better presentation of research results in brief, clear, everyday language, presenting both the strengths and limitations of different types of research, the organisation of policy dialogues to help bring researchers and policy makers together to determine feasible and policy relevant research questions, the development of a new cadre of professionals equally comfortable in both the research and policy making environments, and the use of formal assessment bodies which synthesise a range of evidence to help inform key policy making questions.

Discussion: Evidence is not just generated from research: other sources of information include media reports, representations from consumer groups and general public concerns. Knowledge transfer is thus not a linear one-time event; it requires ongoing active dialogue and exchange between researchers, policy makers and practitioners. There is potential to replicate existing mechanisms and approaches to help facilitate knowledge transfer across Europe; one key challenge, however, is to strengthen the capacity not only to conduct, but also to interpret and communicate research findings.

Keywords

knowledge transfer, knowledge broking, policy syntheses, implementation

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