

A new section for IJPH: knowledge synthesis, translation and exchange

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For the past 10–15 years, and following the lead of clinical medicine, there has been a strong movement within public health to foster evidence-based practices, programs and policies. Various agencies, mainly in the Anglo-Saxon world, have been implemented to further this agenda. In the US, the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention has created “The Guide to Community Preventive Services” to support the work of the Task Force on Community Preventive Services whose mandate includes “making recommendations for interventions that promote population health based on systematic reviews of scientific evidence” (<http://www.thecommunityguide.org/about/task-force-members.html>). In the UK, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) comprises three centres among which the Centre for Public Health Excellence has the mandate to “develop guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention of ill health” (http://www.nice.org.uk/aboutnice/whoweare/structureofnice/structure_of_nice.jsp). In Canada, the National Collaborating Centres for Public Health is a network of six centres whose mandate is to “promote and improve the use of scientific research of other knowledge to strengthen public health practices and policies in Canada” (<http://www.nccph.ca/en/home.aspx>). There is undoubtedly an increasing demand for high quality syntheses of primary evaluation of public and population health programs (the knowledge synthesis part), and for their formatting into products that will support the development

of a professional ethos of research informed practice (the translation and exchange part). IJPH wants to contribute to this movement and is now developing a new section devoted to research in knowledge synthesis, translation and exchange.

In this section, we plan to publish original contributions in the form of empirical studies and commentaries that will support the development of a research culture in public health practice and strengthen public health research practices that are relevant for public health interventions. In terms of empirical studies, we are interested in publishing different kinds of synthesis of evaluation studies about a wide range of public health interventions. Syntheses can take two forms:

1. *Narrative reviews* summarize a large body of evaluation research that examine particular aspects with regards to a certain type of public health intervention. In addition to narrative accounts of intervention outcomes, we are particularly interested in narrative reviews of the various implementation aspects of public health programs. An example of the latter would be a synthesis that attempts to answer the question whether participatory processes in public health interventions are associated with better cultural adaptation of the intervention to local context. Narrative reviews do not necessitate the pooled estimation of effect sizes. They are best suited for an in-depth investigation of the interactions between the intervention and its context.
2. *Synthetic reviews* are more about examining intervention efficacy through the pooling of efficacy results from various evaluation studies. Although we acknowledge that synthetic reviews of public health interventions are difficult to conduct essentially

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because of the important variations in intervention implementation, we are particularly interested to publish such studies about key public health interventions. We do not believe that the randomized controlled trial is the only valid design to evaluate intervention efficacy and effectiveness. Therefore, we welcome synthetic reviews that will include a variety of evaluation designs as it is done for instance, in the conduct of realist syntheses.

In addition to knowledge synthesis papers we are interested in publishing empirical studies of knowledge translation and exchange strategies, their implementation and efficacy to transform public health practice. We want to publish about these efforts and their results. We define knowledge translation and exchange practices as activities or functions that bring together researchers or research results and practitioners in order to build bridges that will increase the science base of practice and the relevance of

research. We believe that our field is replete with such efforts, that some of them are being studied systematically and are worth sharing with the scientific and practitioner communities.

Finally, we are interested in publishing peer reviewed commentaries and methodological hints about knowledge synthesis, translation and exchange in the field of public health. We think that those kinds of contributions can address the peculiarities of our field and promote fruitful debates about the various implications of those singularities. We hope that this new section will contribute to strengthening public health practice and supporting the development of research cultures within public health organizations. We also believe that the publication of high quality empirical research about the processes by which evaluation results are translated and integrated into public health practice is an essential step in the generalization of evidence informed public health practice.