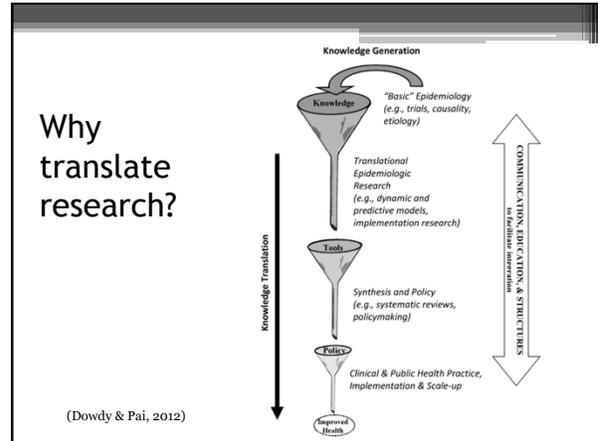


Communicating Science
Translating public health research for policy and practice

Marjory Ruderman, MHS

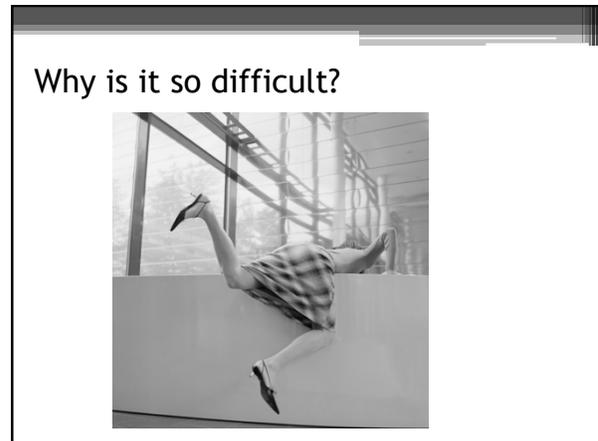


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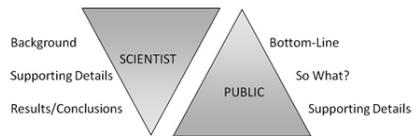


"Failing to translate research knowledge into action in health care contributes to health inequities and wastes costly and time-consuming research."

(Ward, House, & Hamer, 2009)



Communication styles



communicatingscience.aaas.org/comm101/3point.shtml

Not my job!

- Opinions about the role of researchers and research institutions
 - Producing knowledge vs. engaging in policy process
 - Informing vs. influencing
- Concerns about objectivity and credibility
- Specialization of communications discipline

(Crichton & Theobald, 2011; Brownson et al., 2006)

Institutional disincentives

- Few rewards for this kind of work in academia
- Time away from academic work that *is* rewarded
- Academic journals less likely to publish negative results
- Institutional culture

(Crichton and Theobald, 2011)

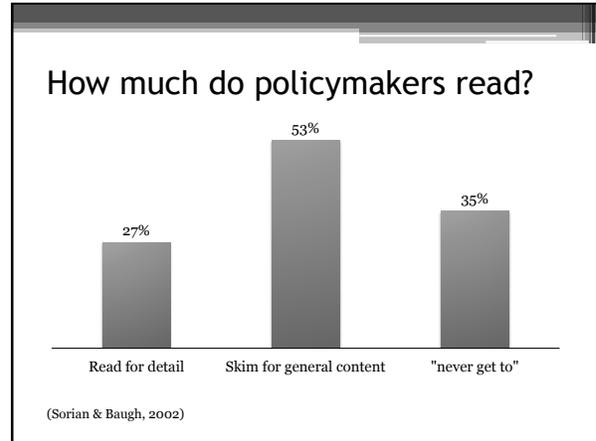
Too much information, too little time

- Information overload
- Mistimed communication
- Very little time to absorb information
- Mismatch of “product” to audience

(Brownson et al., 2006 and 2011; Higgins et al., 2011)

State PH Department Community & Family Health Division Director Schedule

Monday April 6, 2009	Tuesday April 7, 2009
9:00am Senior Staff Meeting, New VS in IMR	8:30am Mtg w/senior Medicaid staff and analysts to review 1 st draft of family planning waiver application
11:00am Advisory Board Meeting, Newborn Screening Program	11:30am Be in Annapolis to attend Governor's Press Conference announcing Baby Kits for New Parents
4:30pm Give a talk in H Grason's Child Health course on the state's injury prevention programs	(and so on)



Perspectives on “evidence”

- Types of evidence relied on
- Credibility of source
- Definition of “evidence-based”

(Brownson et al., 2006; Jacobs et al., 2012; Kerner, 2008)

Different questions and contexts

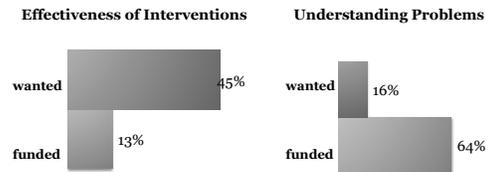
- Time frames for research rarely align with those for policy decisions
- Researchers’ questions often are different from policymakers’ and practitioners’ questions

(Brownson et al., 2006; Kerner, 2008; Shonkoff, 2000)

"Science is focused on *what we do not know*. Social policy and the delivery of health and human services are focused on *what we should do*. Scientists are interested in questions. Policymakers and practitioners are interested in answers. Scholars embrace complexity. Policymakers demand simplicity. Scientists suggest that we stop and reflect. Service providers are expected to act."

(Shonkoff, 2000)

What research questions do practitioners want?
What research gets funded?



Stevens, Liabo, & Uppal. How well does research fit the needs of practitioners working to improve the well-being of children and families? www.whatworksforchildren.org.uk

How can we do better?

Recognize that it IS your job.

- Does your work rely on public funding?
- Do you want to see the effects of your work?

Compete in the marketplace of ideas.



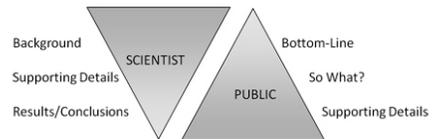
Lauren Tobias
Director of Communications
Institute of Medicine
National Academy of Sciences



Molly Galvin
Senior Media Officer
Office of News and Public Information
National Academy of Sciences



Craft a clear message.



communicatingscience.aaas.org/comm101/3point.shtml

Refine your message for the audience and the medium.



Lauren Tobias
Director of Communications
Institute of Medicine
National Academy of Sciences



Molly Galvin
Senior Media Officer
Office of News and Public Information
National Academy of Sciences



Build relationships.

- With the right people
 - Policymakers and other users of knowledge
 - Other organizations involved in the policy process
 - Communications staff at your organization
- At the right time
 - Not an add-on at the end of research

Be strategic.

- Ask the right questions
- Analyze audience information needs
 - What do they need to know?
 - How do they prefer to receive information?
- Use the right tools
 - Length, format, balance of data to “story,” etc.
- Communicate if/when necessary

Think of knowledge translation "not as a one-way transfer of information from researchers to policy-makers but as a reciprocal process of interaction and exchange among the producers and users of knowledge, where users might include policy-makers, service providers, nongovernmental organizations, private industry or the general public."

(Jacobson, Butterill, Goering, 2003)

Overcoming the challenges

- Make it your job
- Gather the right tools
 - Clear message
 - Targeted for audience
 - Relationships with end users and information “brokers”
- Sustain engagement to make a difference

Keep learning

- Modules on “translational writing”:
www.jhsph.edu/wchpc
- Distance learning resources on communication:
navigator.mchtraining.net

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