



THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Making the evidence fit the policy

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- § Researchers increasingly seeking to influence policy based on research findings
- § Point to the evidence-based medicine advances in improving the quality of care
- § Why cannot same principles apply to policy?

- § Policy is complex- researchers' solutions are one-dimensional & simplistic
- § Because policy developed in context of Budget, confidentiality in the process must be maintained
- § Difficult therefore to 'road test' policy options
- § Expectation that governments will 'get it right' first time round

- § Decisions by governments
- § Public safety/protection/order
- § Distribution of available resources

- § Interviewer: 'Is there any intelligence that Saddam Hussein has any ties to September 11?'
- § Donald Rumsfeld: 'You have to recognise the *evidence piles up*'

September 2002-quoted in Watson 2004

- § Evidence-based
- § Rational process
- § Balancing of interests
- § Long term perspective
- § Open & accountable
- § Objectively evaluated
- § Reactive
- § Ad hoc
- § responding to specific interests
- § Short term horizon
- § Secretive
- § Spin

- § Microeconomic reform: National Competition Policy
- § Balanced budgets & economic rationalists
- § Costs:
 - Ø increasing % GDP on health
 - Ø 'out of control' items- PBS
- § Intergenerational issues
 - Ø Increasing 'dependency'

§ Trade:

Ø Free trade agreements

Ø Goods & services

§ International conventions:

Ø Human rights

§ Workforce

Ø Mobility

Ø Shortages

How might research help policy?

- § Determine priorities in health
- § Organise health systems to provide safe & effective care
- § Get best health outcome for every dollar spent

Case study 1: tobacco- evidence drives policy

- § Late 50s/early 60s: emerging evidence re adverse health effects tobacco
- § Early 70s: seminal US surgeon-general report
- § Early 80s: advertising tobacco advertising phased out; QUIT campaigns; workplace bans
- § 90s: public place bans (transport; restaurants); product label warnings
- § Decline in smoking rates only after range of measures introduced

Case study 2: Mexico- policy finds the evidence

- § Concerns that cost of health care a factor in persistent poverty
- § Data from national accounts proved more than half health expenditure in Mexico out of pocket
- § Belief had been health system based on public funding
- § New evidence used as lever for policy change to a national insurance system

Frenk, 2006

- § Agenda: health competing for resources
- § Budget: health demonstrated as contributor rather than drain
- § Capacity: long term investments in capacity building
- § Deliverables: specific benefits of proposals need to be demonstrated
- § Evidence: power of scientific evidence not to be underestimated.

Frenk, 2006

- § Right problem
- § Right evidence
- § Right policy
- § Right time

- § Watson D, Watson's Dictionary of Weasel Words, Random House, Sydney 2004.
- § Frenk J, Lancet 2006; 368:954-61.