

Facilitating the Transfer of Research into Policy and Practice:

The Strategic Health Research Program

Presenter: David Van der Hoek
Project Officer
Research Policy and Ethics Unit
SA Department of Health



Outline

- **Background**
- **SHRP Overview**
- **Research Priority Setting**
- **Funded Projects**
- **Research Transformation**
- **Current Activities**

The Context

- **Previously DHS ran HSRIP Grants**
- **HSRIP based on a 'priority-driven' (PD) model**
- **SA focussed – relatively small pool of funding**
- **Shortfalls: priorities too broad, resulted in projects being funded that were more consistent w/ the interests of researchers, rather than the Department.**

The Context

- **The upshot: while some projects funded under HSRIP retained relevance to health policy and decision making upon completion, others were past the 'policy due date' by the time final findings were in.**
- **In 2005 the Program was redesigned and renamed – the Strategic Health Research Program.**

SHRP – The Basics

- **2 research streams: research synthesis (secondary research) and new research (primary research).**
- **Model for Program based on work of Jonathan Lomas, CHSRF, and his 'listening' process for developing applied research priorities, used in Canada and the UK.**
- **Ultimate aim: to increase the relevance and use of funded research by aligning research priorities with the policy and decision making context of the SA health system.**



SHRP – The Basics

Key principles:

- **Enhancing the evidence base across key priority areas**
- **Linkage and exchange to build strategic links between researchers and end-users of research (e.g. decision and policy-makers)**
- **Multidisciplinary teamwork (including involvement of disciplines outside of health such as social sciences, geography etc) to respond comprehensively to complex research issues**

Research focus:

- **Population health**
- **Prevention and early intervention**
- **Health Equity**



Priority Setting: 05-06

- DH lead agency for a number of target areas under South Australia's Strategic Plan (2004-2014). Under the 'old' SASP, these were under "Improving Wellbeing" (Objective 2):
 - Infant Mortality
 - Psychological Distress
 - Smoking
 - Healthy Life Expectancy
 - Overweight and Obesity
- Additionally DH assigned a role under T6.1 – "Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing".

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Priority Setting 05-06

- SHRP undertook a 'listening' process with key stakeholders across the SA health system, Sep 05-Mar 06.
- The approach: what are the key issues you are dealing with (policy, planning, practice), for which further research is needed?
- Our intention was to have health system staff identify the issues (from policy, planning, practice perspective), and then translate these issues to researchable topics with assistance from local researchers.
- Lomas's model of 'linkage and exchange' underpinned our process – aligning research/ers with decision makers

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What we learned

- Consultation was difficult – getting to the heart of the issues was not straightforward, nor was getting consensus on what was a priority. A learning process for all.
- Engaging researchers to ‘translate’ issues did not work well.
- SASP targets narrowly defined – in order to construct meaningful research topics, had to broaden our focus.



Outcomes – SHRP 06-07 Round

- 5 key theme areas, with 3 research topics under each
- A call for applications in Oct 06
- 25 EOI's received
- Some areas did not attract interest – notably some Aboriginal topics
- Following rigorous assessment & peer review, 7 projects approved for funding in April 2007.



The Projects

INFANT MORTALITY

'Preventing infant deaths in Aboriginal and teenage women in South Australia'

Chief Investigator: Philippa Middleton, Discipline of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University of Adelaide.

- **A broad research synthesis**
- **Will inform policy and practice decision support by identifying which models and strategies are most likely to be able to improve survival of infants for Indigenous and teenage women in South Australia.**



The Projects

OVERWEIGHT & OBESITY

Project 1

'Effective strategies to reduce the costs of overweight and obesity to SA'

Chief investigators: Prof Christian Gericke and A/Prof John Moss, Department of Public Health, Adelaide University.

- **Aim of project: to estimate the economic costs of obesity to SA to guide appropriate resource allocation to effective strategies which will increase the proportion of South Australians 18 and over with healthy weight.**
- **Builds on ACE study in 2006 which estimated costs of obesity to Australia.**
- **The SA focus of this study designed to build case for greater investment in overweight and obesity prevention in this State.**



The Projects

OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY

Project 2

'Socio-economic status and overweight/obesity: supply of and access to (un)healthy food'

Chief Investigators: A/Prof John Coveney, A/Prof Paul Ward and Dr Fiona Verity, Department of Public Health, Flinders University.

- Involves both research synthesis and new research.
- It is not clear what influence the supply, cost and availability of un/healthy foods is having on the patterns of overweight and obesity across the SA population.
- Existing international research on so-called 'food deserts' as well as shopping basket surveys in SA.
- This project build clearer picture of what is happening around supply and cost of foods in SA - anecdotal evidence exists, but without certainty, policy and programs to curb rising rates of overweight and obesity, and promote healthy weight, response may be limited.



The Projects

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

Project 1

'Psychological Distress in the South Australian adult population'

Chief Investigator: Mr John Glover, Director, Public Health Information Development Unit (PHIDU), Adelaide University.

- 12 month study
- Looking at associations between the Kessler 10 and a range of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the population, and their health status, including the prevalence of major chronic conditions and associated health risk factors (e.g. smoking, unhealthy weight, at-risk from alcohol intake, physical inactivity).
- What are the risk factors and determinants of psychological distress (& conversely, psychological wellbeing)?



The Projects

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

Project 2

Assessment of the Determinants and Epidemiology of Psychological Distress (ADEPD) Study

Chief Investigators: Prof Helen Winefield, Professor of Psychology, University of Adelaide and Cathy Chittleborough, Senior Epidemiologist, Population Research and Outcome Studies Unit, Department of Health

- This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the determinants of Psychological Distress (PD) and psychological wellness, and mental health in the SA population
- Range of population data inc. the South Australian Monitoring and Surveillance System (SAMSS) and other sources.



The Projects

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

Project 3

Resilience and the mental health and wellbeing of farm families experiencing climate variation in South Australia

Chief Investigators: Dr. Debra King and Dr Diannah Lowry, National Institute for Labour Studies (NILS), Flinders University, and A/Prof Colin McDougall, Department of Public Health, Flinders University.

- A key objective of this research is to better understand resilience in drought affected farm families. This new research will involve recruitment of farming families as a key data source.
- Mental illness (e.g. depression, suicide) a key issue for this population group, in light of the current drought conditions. Also a key policy issue for DH.
- Research findings to inform policy makers and others for health promotion to enhance the wellbeing of farmers faced with adversity.



The Projects

SMOKING

Exploring resilience and coping in relation to smoking within 'at risk' populations

Chief Investigators: Dr George Tsourtos and A/Prof Paul Ward
Department of Public Health, Flinders University.

- This research is examining approaches that are effective or ineffective in terms of reducing smoking rates in 3 key population groups (young people, those with mental illness, and Aboriginal people)
- First stage: a synthesis of literature re smoking and resilience
- Second stage: new research examining the reasons why some groups of smokers quit smoking and others never start, even though they belong to population groups with statistically high rates of smoking.
- Outcomes to inform policy and practice in this field.



SHRP & Research Transformation

- 'Research transformation' – a term we are using to the transfer of research into policy, planning and practice.
- Research Transformation Framework (RTF) – finalised, awaiting approval. This will be a research policy document to guide the transformation and uptake of research across the Department and Health Regions.
- The consultations, reading and writing that informed the RTF also informed the design of SHRP.



SHRP & Research Transformation

“The capacity of research evidence to be transformed into policy, planning and practice depends on the quality, timeliness and relevance of research to an issue or problem under consideration, and the opportunities for researchers and decision makers to engage in a dialogue. However, this same capacity is influenced by other factors: the way in which a given ‘problem’ is constructed and discussed (and thus the evidence brought to bear on it), political influences within and outside the organisation, and a broad range of what may be termed ‘contextual’ factors (for example, community values and interests, or funding considerations).”

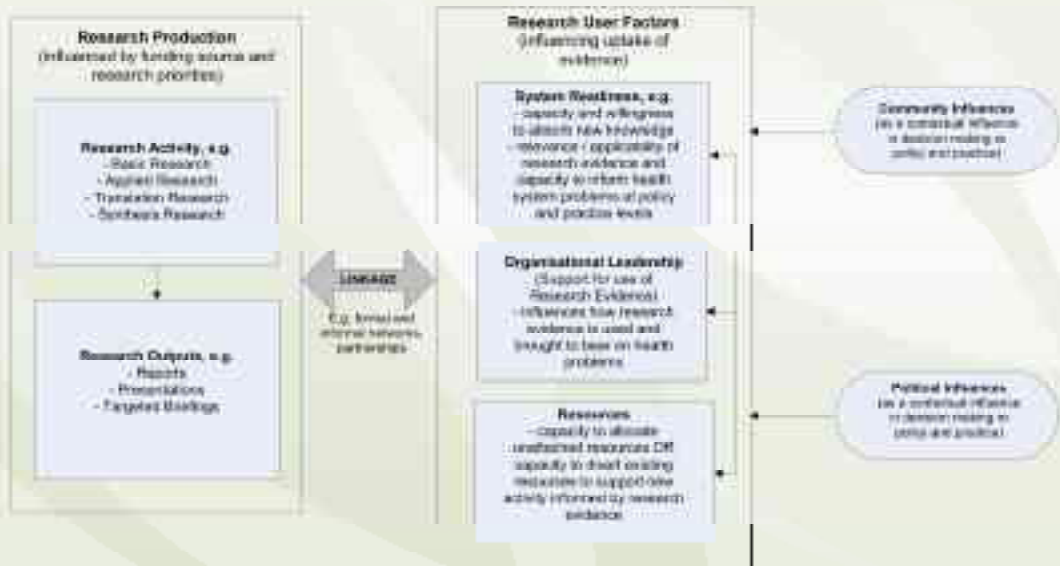
RTF pp6-7.



RTF & SHRP

- ‘Linkage & exchange’ embedded in SHRP priority setting.
- Health system decision makers directly informed the priority agenda.
- Research synthesis: collating existing research evidence for decision makers to make it more accessible & therefore more likely to be used.
- SHRP Theme Groups: will bring together researchers and health system decision makers whose work revolves around specific theme/topic areas – e.g. Infant Mortality – to build relationships and so they are kept informed of research progress as it unfolds.





Current Activities

- Currently revising research priorities for an 07-08 round.
- Version 2 of SASP released in early 2007 following community consultation: many targets revised, additional targets added.
- Some new areas this round – e.g. health systems research – not included in 06-07 priorities. Also strong emphasis on Aboriginal research.
- Program to be finalised late Sep / early Oct 07.
- Website will contain updated priorities, guidelines and other material.

Contact Details

SHRP

Web: www.health.sa.gov.au/shrp

Email: shrp@health.sa.gov.au

Personal

Email: david.vanderhoek@health.sa.gov.au

Ph: (08) 8226 6431



Questions

