

Evidence Based Decision Making

The Application of Evidence Based Decision Making Within the Department of HCS

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Overview of Presentation

- Introduction and Context
- Aspects of EBDM in the health and community services sector;
- Practical considerations of using EBDM in the public service;

What is EBDM ?

- Many, many definitions;
- Evidence based clinical practice is an approach to decision making in which the clinician uses the best evidence available, in consultation with the client, to decide upon the option that is most suitable (Muir, 1997).
- EBDM is the systematic application of the best available evidence to the evaluation of options and to decision making in clinical, management and policy settings (SK Health Services Utilization & Research Commission).

EBDM within the Department of Health and Community Services

- Sector is rich with examples of EBDM;
- Difficult to assess the quality but there is quantity;
- Consistent effort to bring evidence to decision making tables;
- Two prime motivators: (1) scarcity of resources to satisfy all demands and (2) scientific nature of many of the sub-sectors

Some Recent Examples

- Strategic planning is a management technique in which the use of evidence is essential;
- Health Forums 2001 – a provincial consultation process – reaffirmed the sector’s commitment to the use of evidence.
- Began with a discussion paper that reflected our definition of the main challenges in the system based on evidence related to population health status and service utilization;

Health Forums 2001

- Regional profile documents, a description of a broad array of indicators for each of the 6 HCS regions, were developed in an attempt to provide the appropriate context for informed decision making;
- The consultations then collected a vast amount of evidence from stakeholders reflecting their accumulated expertise, knowledge and values

Health Forums 2001

- The outcome from the consultation, a strategic health plan entitled *Healthier Together* contains a restated definition of the issues with a beginning plan to address them;
- Quantifiable targets have been set; and,
- *Healthier Together* makes a clear statement about the importance of monitoring and evaluation – commitment to EBDM.

Evaluation

- Represents another major commitment to EBDM (especially if you act on results!);
- The recently terminated Prescription Drug Monitoring program is a good example.
- The Chancellor Park Evaluation is an example of another, very new venture for the DHCS.

Federal / Provincial Expectations

- Accountability requirements following the September 2000 First Ministers Accord;
- *Health scope* was our response;
- Will be building on this process in the coming weeks;

Infrastructure Developments

- Two important provincial organizations also support the quest for EBDM;
- The Newfoundland and Labrador Center for Health Information (NLCHI); and
- The Newfoundland and Labrador Center for Applied Health Research

EBDM and the Public Service

- Environment not always conducive to EBDM;
- Focused commitment must be balanced against the realities of day to day business;
- Timing can play havoc with evidence;
- Need to build it in or “create a space” where evidence is critical to decisions;

Evidence in Budget Decisions

- Not as prominent as one might think;
- Fiscal imperatives often trump evidence;
- Can be of use in some budget conflicts – identification of negative impacts if program to be cut / reduced;
- Best use, however, is when evidence can show equal or better outcomes for reduced cost;
- Many examples in the HCS sector – home care vs. institutional care; NPs rather than GPs

Maximizing the Use of Evidence

- EBDM only effective if evidence is relevant;
- Relevance is the responsibility of knowledge developers and managers
- Ministers / executive provide strategic direction but knowledge developers and managers collect, select, analyze and communicate the evidence to decision makers;
- Must be relevant to policy context, the political environment and dynamics among stakeholders;

Maximizing EBDM

- Advocates are essential;
- Producers of evidence must develop new sources and find ways to disseminate;
- Databases, indicators, systems and networks have to be exquisitely maintained to bring evidence to bear quickly;
- Annual planning cycles useful tool;