

# Knowledge Transfer to Support Evidence-informed Health Policy

Maureen Dobbins

McMaster University

Part of the AllerGen webinar series: Knowledge Translation for Research Success

Maureen Dobbins delivered a webinar in AllerGen's Knowledge Translation (KT) for Research Success series on May 8, 2017, in which she discussed how evidence-informed decision-making can be integrated into organizational structures and processes using examples from work with public health departments across Canada over the past two decades. The main messages from this webinar and a hyperlinked index to the presentation are provided below.

## EVIDENCE-INFORMED DECISION-MAKING (EIDM)

**Many factors inform decision making in public health.** The best available research evidence is one factor, but also of importance are local context and geography; community and political preferences; available public health resources (both human and financial); and available public health expertise. Each factor may exert a degree of influence on different decisions across different jurisdictions—what might work in one location, considering the research evidence and other factors, may not be the best intervention to implement in another. Context matters.

**Knowledge translation interventions must be tailored** to the specific needs of not only an organization (or government agency or community), but, within it, to the specific needs of individual sub-groups—divisions, departments, or even teams. You need to identify the relevance of your evidence to stakeholders at a granular level, and to target your messages or interventions accordingly.

**Practice change has an emotional dimension.** Healthcare practitioners want to believe that their practices are beneficial; they are usually emotionally invested in the interventions that they deliver. If the research

indicates that their practices are not effective and that practice change is needed, this must be communicated to them in a way that takes into account their emotional investment. Otherwise, they may become alienated from any effort to improve their practice.

**Leadership and strategic direction are keys to success** when it comes to promoting evidence-informed decision making (EIDM) within an organization. An organization needs a committed leader, as well as champions of EIDM at different levels. An organization also needs to identify EIDM as a strategic priority, and to ensure that everyone at all levels of the organization understands the strategic plan and their role within it.

**The priorities of constituents drive policymaker interest and involvement.** If you want policymakers to pay attention to a particular issue, or to the implications of your research evidence on an issue, ensure that their constituents are speaking about that issue as being one of importance to them. Policymakers are motivated to engage with an issue when their political constituents are concerned about it.

## RESOURCES

- [Is Research Working for You?: Self-Assessment Tool](#) (Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement)
- [Registry of Methods and Tools](#): knowledge translation methods and tools for public health (NCCMT)
- [Understanding Research Evidence](#): a series of short videos that explain important terms that public health workers and policymakers are likely to encounter when looking at research evidence
- [Health Evidence](#): access to over 5000 quality-rated systematic reviews evaluating the effectiveness of public health interventions

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**Available for this webinar: [slides \(in PDF\)](#) | [video recording](#)**

**Maureen Dobbins** (RN, PhD) is a professor in the School of Nursing at McMaster University. Her research efforts seek to understand knowledge translation among public health decision makers in Canada. Since 2001, Maureen has been the Director of [Health Evidence](#), and, since 2011, the Scientific Director of the [National Collaborating Centre Methods and Tools](#) (NCCMT).