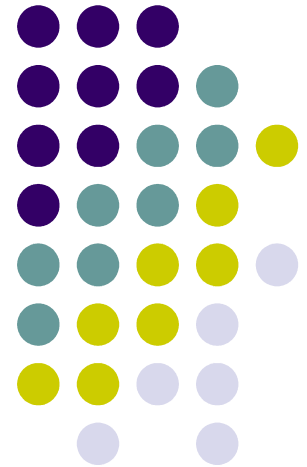


EPOC & Australian Health Policy

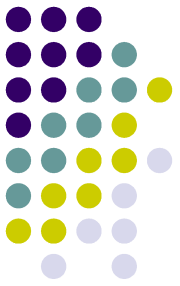
Russell Gruen

Cochrane Effective Practice &
Organisation of Care Group

Menzies School of Health Research, Darwin.

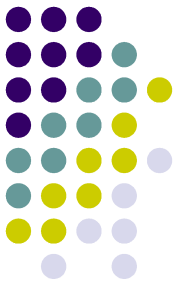


Pressing Issues in Australian Health Policy



- Workforce
- Service Accessibility & Equity
- Financing & Health Insurance
- Choice & limitations of services
- Quality Control
- Balancing private & public sectors

- And many more.....



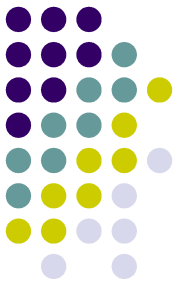
**How can EPOC
(& Cochrane more generally)
contribute to
Australian Health Policy concerns?**

Evidence for policy-making



- Lots of questions
 - Finding solutions to the most burdensome health problems
 - Fitting these solutions into health systems
 - Bringing about change in health systems
- Many types of evidence can inform answers to these questions
 - Letters and calls from disease groups
 - Support or opposition by professional associations
 - Experiences of neighbouring jurisdictions
 - Research evidence
 - So what's the most effective and efficient way to acquire it?

Translating research for policy-makers

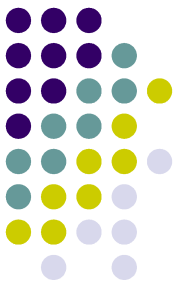


Syntheses of research-based evidence



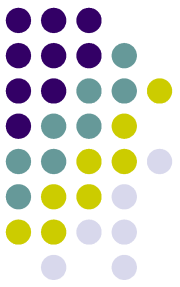
1. Reduce the likelihood that public policymakers will be misled by research (by being more systematic and transparent in the identification, selection, appraisal and synthesis of studies)
2. Increase confidence among public policymakers about what can be expected from an intervention (by increasing the number of units for study)
3. Allow civil servants and political staff to focus on appraising the local applicability of syntheses and identifying actionable messages arising from syntheses

Checklist for assessing the local applicability of syntheses

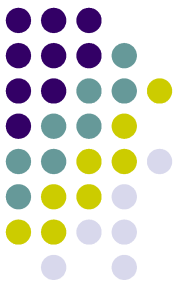


- Could it work in my jurisdiction?
 - Are there important differences in the structures elements of health systems (or health system subsectors) that mean an intervention could not work in the same way?
- Will it work?
 - Are there important differences in the perspectives and influence of stakeholders (who have the political resources to influence decisions) that mean an intervention may not be taken up the same way?
 - Does the health system face other challenges that substantially alter the potential benefits and harms (or risks) of the intervention?

Checklist for assessing the local applicability of syntheses (2)



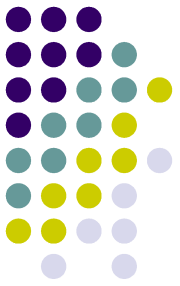
- What would it take to make it work?
 - Can power dynamics and on-the-ground realities and constraints be changed in the short- to medium-term and what are the prospects for making this happen?
- Is it worth it?
 - Is the balance of benefits and harms (or risks) classifiable as net benefits, trade-offs, uncertain trade-offs, or no net benefits?
 - Are the incremental health benefits from incorporating the intervention among the mix of interventions provided worth the incremental costs?



Questions about context

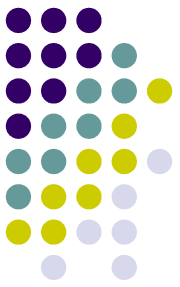
- Relative importance of the health problem
- Relevance of outcome measures
- Practicality of the intervention
- Appropriateness of the intervention
- Cost-effectiveness of the intervention

Existing collaboratives in Australia



- Australasian Cochrane Centre Evidence Summaries
- National Institute of Clinical Studies – “bridging the knowing-doing gap”
- Others

Cochrane Effective Practice and Organisation of Care (EPOC) Group



EPOC aims to undertake systematic reviews of interventions to improve health care delivery and health care systems including:

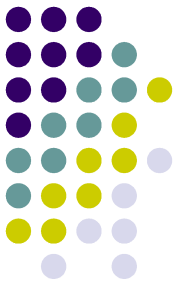
- Professional interventions (e.g. continuing medical education, audit and feedback)
- Financial interventions (e.g. professional incentives)
- Organisational interventions (e.g. the expanded role of pharmacists)
- Regulatory interventions

Cochrane Effective Practice and Organisation of Care (EPOC) Group



- EPOC reviews can include randomised and quasi experimental studies
- Development of new methods:
 - To assess quality of these studies
 - To identify these studies
 - To analyse and synthesise reviews

Cochrane Effective Practice and Organisation of Care (EPOC) Group



Progress to date - register and reviews

- Register of 4000+ primary studies
- 33 reviews
- Collaborating with over 150 researchers from 12 countries

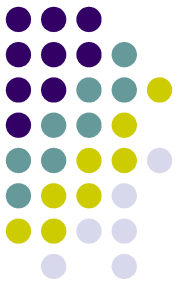
Alderson, Bero, Grilli, Grimshaw, McAuley, Oxman, Zwarenstein (2002). *Cochrane Library*.

How can EPOC support decision makers?



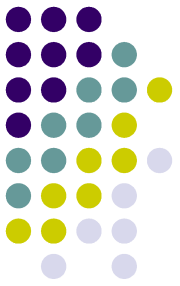
- Support conduct of Cochrane systematic reviews
- Collaboration with other knowledge synthesis groups
- Linkage and exchange
- Training
- Invisible college

EPOC reviews – quality improvement



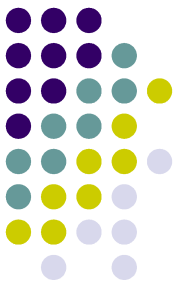
- Does audit and feedback lead to improvements in quality of care?
 - Yes – range of observed effects +2% to +11% (median +9%) absolute improvements in quality of care (based on 52 studies)
- Do local opinion leaders lead to improvements in quality of care?
 - Unclear – opinion leaders lead to mixed results across 8 studies – ‘it is not always clear what local opinion leaders do and replicable descriptions are needed’
- Do computer assisted drug dosage systems reduce adverse effects
 - Yes – systems reduce toxic drug levels by 12% (95% confidence interval 1% - 24%) (based on 4 studies) and adverse reactions by 6% (95 % confidence intervals 0% - 12%) (based on 5 studies)

EPOC reviews – organisational interventions

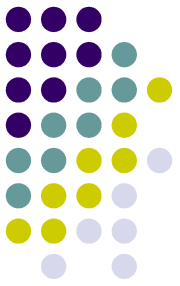


- Do hospital at home schemes lead to reductions in length of stay for elderly medical patients?
 - Yes - reduction inpatient stay of 4 – 6 days with similar outcomes
 - But...
 - Trend towards increase in total length of stay of around 3 days
 - Trend towards increased readmission
 - Potential increase in primary care and community costs

EPOC reviews – organisational interventions

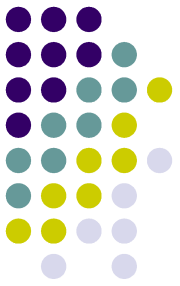


- Does provision of specialist outreach clinics improve health care access and quality in rural and disadvantaged communities ?
 - Uncertain - the available high quality evidence is skewed to urban non-disadvantaged populations



EPOC is relevant

- EPOC undertakes reviews relevant to the needs of decision makers
- We also engage in wide range of other activities to support product and dissemination of EB resources for decision makers, training and linkage and exchange



Australian EPOC Satellite

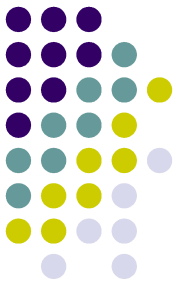
- Announced 22nd October, 2005
- 3 Years
- Based at NICS in Melbourne
- Full time project officer

Australian EPOC Satellite - Goal

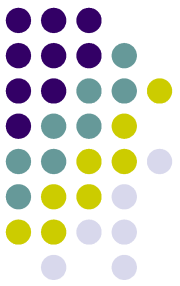


- to assist evidence-based policy-making through systematic reviews of interventions designed to improve health care practice and the delivery of effective health services that are relevant to Australia and the south-east Asian region.

Australian EPOC satellite - Aims



- identify and help produce priority EPOC reviews relevant to Australia;
- support EPOC review activity through training and mentoring of researchers; and
- foster a culture of evidence-based health policy and knowledge translation by promoting the use of *The Cochrane Library*, and EPOC reviews in particular.



- support the EPOC editorial base in Canada to edit, produce and update EPOC reviews, especially reviews relevant to rural areas;
- collaborate with the Australasian Cochrane Centre and the other Australian-based Cochrane groups to further the work of The Cochrane Collaboration in the region; and
- contribute to the international effort of synthesizing research to improve evidence uptake.