A call to action: Improving Australia's health through research focused on how to implement what we already know

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Lifestyle-related chronic diseases (diabetes, CVD, common mental disorders) place significant burden on the Australian health system.

Significant financial investment in generating knowledge about “what” is effective.

Benefits lessened by limited focus on “how” to facilitate its uptake and implementation into policy and practice.

**Implementation research** aims to increase knowledge about “how” to implement and scale-up what is already known into policy and practice.
How do we ensure research evidence bears fruit?
Forum Objective

Forum of researchers, policymakers, health practitioners, program implementers held to identify:

1. *How to develop and implement more evidence-informed approaches to improve lifestyle-related health and related public health issues in Australia.*

2. *How to improve knowledge translation and implementation related to these health issues.*

3. *How to do it better and who to do it with.*
2-day forum included more than 40 participants:

**Academic Institutions:** Victoria University; Institute of Safety Compensation and Recovery Research (ISCRR), University of Western Sydney; Monash University; University of British Columbia; Australian Catholic University; Deakin University; Menzies Research Institute Tasmania; University of Tasmania; University of Melbourne; Parenting Research Centre, Harold Mitchell Institute for Health & Education Policy

**Non-Government Organisations:** Heart Foundation; Stroke Foundation; Cancer Council Victoria; Australian and New Zealand Obesity Society

**Industry:** BUPA Health Foundation
Lectures from international thought leaders in the field of implementation research:

• Allan Best and Barbara Riley (Canada), Ross Brownson (USA)
• Professor Best contributed expert commentary

Scheduled open discussion amongst participants focused on two key questions:

1. What we know about how to implement evidence-informed approaches to improve lifestyle-related health and public health outcomes in Australia?

2. How do we address the identified knowledge gaps to improve Australia’s future health?
I. Evidence and its development

How do we close the evidence-implementation gap by developing the evidence required?

II. Capacity

How do we build capacity at all levels?

III. Engagement and collaboration

How to effectively engage stakeholders?

IV. Power and influence

How to appropriately harness power/influence at all levels?
• Foster collaboration and build sustainable, long term partnerships with a shared vision

• Promote trust and respect in relation to diverse perspectives, disciplines and needs of different populations and communities

• Sustainable implementation and relationships

• Build capacity at multiple levels
• International experience
• Systems models
• Context
• Evaluation
• Health economics
• Research methods and designs
• Types of evidence
Capacity Building

- Systems
- People
- Community engagement
- Resources
- Knowledge brokers
- Understand barriers and enablers
- Sustainability
Engagement

- Community
- Collaborations
- Shared understanding & focus
- Advocacy
- Flexibility
- Relationships
- Effective use
- Creation of power
- Align motivations
- Horizontal networks
- Engage communities
- Academic commitments
Where to from here?

Develop common language/terminology

Develop metrics: Academic vs. D & I impact

- Refocus academic metrics
  - Avoid sole focus of publications

- Career path development
  - Structural challenge requires university & funding body engagement
Where to from here?

**Funding**

- End-user investment into D & I science
- D&I scientists advocate for a focused funding stream
- D&I representatives on Grant Review Panels to influence the successful funding of D&I projects
- Cross-funded cross-appointments
- Change expectations of funders’ regarding pre-determined project submission prior to the allocation of funding
Where to from here?

D & I Science processes

• Foster international collaboration
• Ensure decision makers are at the table
• Increase/improve training options
• Promote horizontal networks & engage communities
• Enlist knowledge broker/s – train project managers
• Ask “What can we do for you?” of the community and of the policy maker