

Using Evidence in Public Health Settings: Do we have the Right Recipe?

Sonya H. Corkum

Vice President, Knowledge Exchange and Communications
Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion
& Chef (to be)

Presentation Overview

- My Day Job: Overview on the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion
- My Night Job: Finding the right recipe for Public Health Knowledge Exchange
- Closing words on ensuring satisfied customers

What we do?

- arm's-length government agency dedicated to protecting and promoting the health of all Ontarians and reducing inequities in health.
- **link** public health practitioners, front-line health workers and researchers to the **best scientific intelligence and knowledge** from around the world.
- provides **expert scientific and technical advice** to:
 - infection prevention and control;
 - surveillance and epidemiology;
 - health promotion, chronic disease and injury prevention;
 - environmental and occupational health;
 - health emergency preparedness;
 - public health laboratory services

Who we serve:

Ministries

Public health
units

Health-care
system



Overarching goal: We enable better public health policy and practice by our partners to improve the health of Ontarians and reduce inequities in health

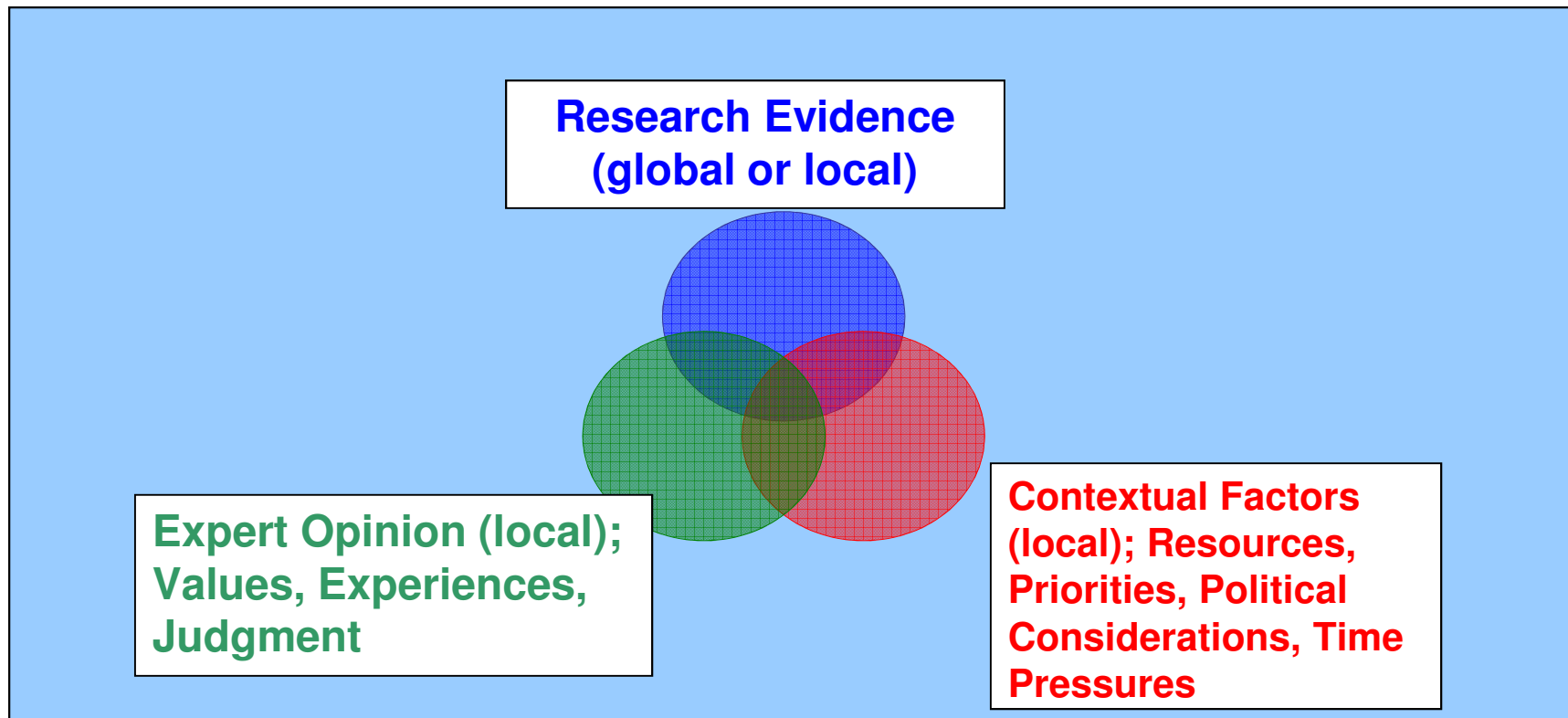
Knowledge Exchange

- Using research evidence to influence attitudes & knowledge of people to change:
 - their behaviour,
 - their practice, or
 - their position/policies
- Partnerships, 2 way communication, high quality evidence are key!

Or....

- Getting the right information to the right people in the right format at the right time.....

Components of Decision-Making: more than evidence...



Recipe for Fool Proof Public Health KE

Dry Ingredients:

- Lots of evidence (does not need to be RCT's but must be of high quality; can be imported or local; use trusted brands)

Wet Ingredients:

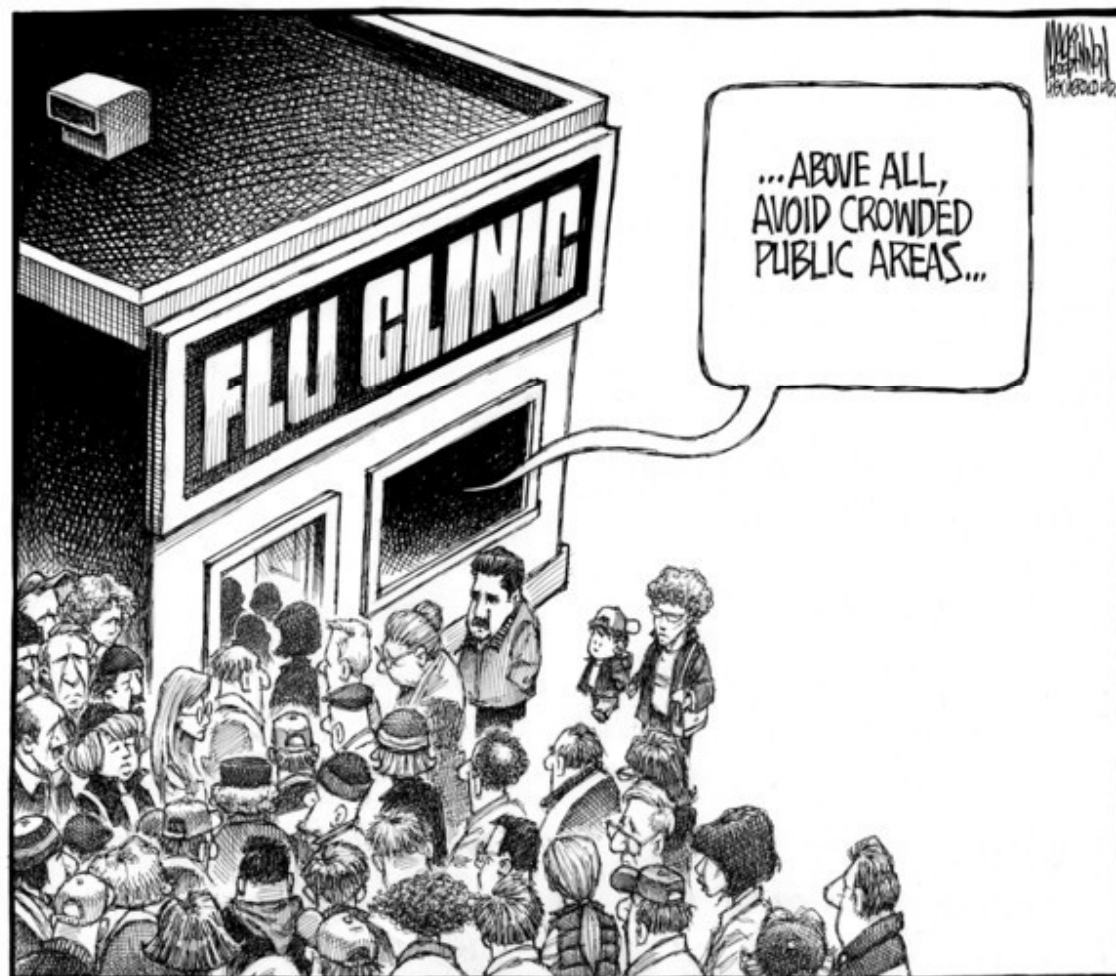
- Appropriate partnerships (ensure pinch of media)
- Evidence synthesizers
- Evidence users (mixture)
- Clarified messages
- Old and new dissemination methods

Methods

- Build partnerships first. Allow to rest until needed later on
- Wash hands
- Sharpen knives
- Ensure your problem is well defined, refine again if needed
- Sift evidence until results become clear (this step can be eliminated if there are existing systematic reviews) See healthevidence.ca
- Know the temperature of your context – is it hotly needed?

Methods Continued

- Ensure your culture is pre-set
- Identify public health evidence users
- Ensure systematic way to identify their evidence needs
- Do not become distracted with new research. Continue to stir...
- Watch carefully the simmering debate on the hierarchy of evidence as applied to public health – Do not let it boil over!
- Public Health KE is not done until there is agreement on messaging (never mix your messages in public)



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More Methods

- Identify the proper messengers
- Know the benefits and limitations of dissemination channels for public health
- Watch your implementation plan closely, taste often and add spices if needed
- Do not rush the process: Public Health KE can take longer than you think
- Plating is important – use garnishes

Learn from problems at Table 2!!!

What changes are needed to enhance the use of evidence in public health?

- We must hold ourselves accountable to ensuring high standards
- Promote more training opportunities for staff on using evidence
- Promote the importance of systematic reviews
- Organizations need to work together to make it easier to retrieve evidence
- Don't use money as an excuse – create partnerships
- Be prepared when window of opportunity opens to promote evidence
- Create cultures of evidence creating, using and promoting
- Be aware of mixed messages

Closing words of caution and advice

- Evidence is only one part of the decision making process
- Downplay frameworks, value chains and big words
- Better coordination is needed across jurisdictions
- Need to use evidence carefully and remember
“if you have a single study, you have a single study!”
- And lastly:

Use lots of butter!!

Thank You!

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