Evidence Use in Policies, Programs and Practices

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Satellite Session: Implementation Science Approaches to FP and RH

International Conference on Family Planning
January 24, 2016
Growing Attention to Evidence-based Policies and Programs

- To help reach ambitious global goals

- High Impact Practices (HIP) – evidence compiled; how to implement HIPs?

- What do we mean by evidence and what evidence is there that evidence is used in decision making?
Rich Evidence Base in FP/RH Including Attention to Use

- **Evidence**
  - Biomedical: contraceptive development
  - National Surveys (WFS, CPS, DHS)
  - Operations Research - factors within the control of managers
  - Implementation Research - to scale up proven programs/practices
  - M&E

- **Use**
  - MORE (Maximizing Results of OR)
  - Data for Decisionmaking
  - E2A Project
  - MEASURE Evaluation
  - The Evidence Project
  - Advance Family Planning (AFP)
  - Implementing Best Practices Consortium (IBP)
  - High Impact Practices (HIP)
Methodology

• Literature review
  – Databases, individual websites and hand-search to locate references on:
    • Evidence-based policy for health or social science
    • Knowledge transfer
    • Translation or utilization for health or social science programs
    • Evidence collected from ‘intervention studies’ in FP programs, and ‘implementation science’ for FP/RH
  – Initially 2000-2014; went back to the 1990s and earlier to capture research utilization in FP

What Do We Mean by Evidence?

To a Researcher ...

“The term evidence-based policy is used in the literature, yet largely relates to only one type of evidence—research.” - Bowen and Zwi, 2005: 0601

Strength of research evidence?

What about M&E data?

Emerging attention to learning by doing

What Do We Mean by Evidence?

To a Decision-maker...

Evidence includes research studies, M&E data, program reports, policy documents, community input and professional experience.

“need to know whether a policy, program or practice is feasible, affordable, implementable and acceptable. If [not]..., there is little point in adopting it, whatever traditional research evidence says”  Klein 2000

Conceptual Framework of the Role of Evidence in Decision Making

Experience
Anecdotal evidence
Opinion

Scientific Evidence

Beliefs

Values

Decision

Constraints: political, economic, legal, ethical

Examples of Other Factors Affecting FP/RH Decisions

• Adolescent reproductive health – political sensitivities
• Task shifting – turf battles
• Depo Provera in India – activist blockage
• FP in the 1990s – in the era of HIV/AIDS
• Standard Days Method (SDM) – modern or traditional?
Example: Developing and Scaling Up Standard Days Method (SDM)
Standard Days Method®

Research has shown that Standard Days Method used with CycleBeads is:

- more than 95% effective (1, 5)
- free of side-effects
- easy to use (1, 5)
- inexpensive and long lasting
- educational


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Efficacy of a new method of family planning: the Standard Days Method

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Received 19 November 2001; received in revised form 12 December 2001; accepted 12 December 2001
Standard Days Method (SDM)

Method Concept and 2000

Pilot Introductions 2000-2004
Method Efficacy 2002

OR Studies 2003-2005


Scaling-up 2007-2012

Source: Lundgren, 2014.
Is SDM a Modern Method?

WHO – until recently listed SDM as a traditional method – recent consultation to review/revise
Women’s Empowerment?

- Couple Communication increased with use of SDM

- CycleSmart: Education for adolescents on fertility awareness

- Yet, criticism that it is a “Catholic” NFP method
Friday, January 27, 2012

Article: No Reason to Reject Standard Days Method

WASHINGTON, D.C., JAN. 25, 2012 (Zenit.org).- Here is a question on bioethics asked by a ZENIT reader and answered by the fellows of the Culture of Life Foundation.

Q: The Standard Days Method (SDM) of Natural Family Planning (NFP) was introduced by Georgetown University and uses a bead counting method. Some Catholic doctors and priests have criticized the SDM for some/all of the following reasons:
1. It is not "natural" because a computer model was used to calculate the days of abstinence.
2. It is endorsed by USAID (which has links to abortion funding).
3. The original research paper left open the possibility of using a back-up method during the fertile period.

My question is: Can Catholic licitly teach and practice the SDM? -- Fr. JM, Southeast Asia
Debate about the Research Supporting SDM

Letter to the Editor, January 20, 2016

“The Pitfalls of Using Selective Data to Represent the Effectiveness, Relevance and Utility of the Standard Days Method (SDM) of Family Planning” (Hardee, Wright, Townsend)
Do Decision-makers Use Evidence?

- Individuals value evidence, but structural issues intervene
  - “in policy decisions, there is a tendency to attend to where concerns are immediate” (Policymaker from Ghana)
- Evidence that supports existing beliefs more likely to be used
- Evidence that goes against existing programming can be threatening
- Evidence on problems easier to use than evidence on solutions
- Lack of evidence for complex decisions → wicked problems
- Local evidence is important for decision-makers
- Donor priorities can influence what evidence is considered: more donor reliance on global data
- Evidence is generally not the deciding factor in decision-making, but the absence of strong data “makes it unlikely that government will adopt and innovation (Spicer et al., 2014: 34).
The Evidence Project is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the terms of cooperative agreement no. AID-OAA-A-13-00087. The contents of this presentation are the sole responsibility of the Evidence Project and Population Council and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

The Evidence Project seeks to expand access to high quality family planning/reproductive health services worldwide through implementation science, including the strategic generation, translation, and use of new and existing evidence. The project is led by the Population Council in partnership with the INDEPTH Network, the International Planned Parenthood Federation, Management Sciences for Health, PATH, and the Population Reference Bureau.