Health impact assessment

A public health practice for developing healthy public policies
Overview

• Theory....
  - Definition and conceptual basis of HIA
  - HIA and public policies

• …and Practice
  - The HIA process
  - The state of the practice across the world and in Canada

• Main issues and challenges in the practice
Theory

A Common definition

Health Impact Assessment (HIA)

“...a combination of procedures, methods and tools by which a policy, program or project may be judged as to its potential effects on the health of a population, and the distribution of those effects within the population”

ECHP, WHO, 1999
Theory

Two roots

• Environmental impact assessment
  – Methodological rigour (science)
  – Expert-driven

• Health promotion
  – Social determinants of health and equity (distributive effects)
  – Citizenship (empowerment)
  – Healthy public policies (Ottawa Charter)
Theory
Main principles and goals

Source: Dahlgren & Whitehead (1991)

Main Principles
• Population health approach
• Rigor and neutrality of the analysis
• Involvement of stakeholders and intersectorial parties
• Reduction of social inequities in health
• Supporting the decision-making process
• Collective responsibility towards the population

Objectives
• Predict the potential effects on the health of the population
• Influence decision-making process
• Raise awareness of decision-makers from outside the health sector
Theory

HIA and developing a policy

Formulation of alternatives

Adoption of a policy

Implementation

Evaluation

(Re) Emergence of a problem

Perception of public and private problems

Agenda setting by the government

HIA

Adapted from Knoepfel, Larrue and Varone (2001)
## Theory

### Different objectives and focuses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Link to Evidence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Production of a public health advisory</td>
<td>Scientific approach</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Democracy/empowerment</td>
<td>Citizenship/participation</td>
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<td>Rising awareness of decision-makers outside the health sector</td>
<td>Intersectoral dynamics</td>
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*Institut national de santé publique Québec*
Theory

Conceptualization of HIA applied to policies

• “To improve public health by adding health awareness to policy making at every level and making concern for improved public health a norm in all policy making” (UK Cabinet Office, 1999)

• Strategic Health Assessment (Mahoney, 2001)
• Policy analysis focused on health (Kemm, 2001)
• Interactive coordination strategy (Bekker, 2007)
Theory

HIA and knowledge transfer

Conditions for success in using knowledge provided by HIA framework:

• Continued interaction between experts and decision-makers (Lavis et al., 2005)
• Information provided at a good timing and in an adapted language (Innvaer et al., 2002)
• Applicable information which is relevant to the context (Landry et al., 2007)
• Information emerging from the co-construction of knowledge (Brousselle et al., 2009)
Practice
A five-steps standard process

Screening
Scoping
Appraisal
Recommendations
Evaluation
Practice
A growing practice across the world
Practice
A practice that has been evaluated

- Allows to structure actions
- Flexible (various approaches)
- Fosters the participation of stakeholders
- Influences the policy process and raises policy-makers’ and stakeholders’ awareness about the wider determinants of health
- Methodological difficulties in terms of predicting the effects
- Interactive approach seems to give better results
Practice
Rising interest in Canada

• Provincial level:
  A mechanism to integrate health in all policies (HiAP)
  E.g.: Alberta, British Colombia, Québec

• Regional/local Level:
  To support the legal mandate of public health
  E.g.: Calgary, Toronto
  To support citizen’s involvement/participation
  E.g.: Nova Scotia (PATH)
  To support intersectoral dynamics
  E.g.: Montérégie (Québec)
Main issues and challenges

• Methodological
  - Predictive capacities
  - Management of uncertainties

• Political and policy context
  - Political will, ideological and cultural context
  - Capacity to fit into the policy process

• Organizational
  - Legitimacy
  - Capacity-building/developing of skills
  - Resources
References

- Wismar et al. (2007).
Workshop

• Brief presentation of the five steps

• By using a fictitious case study:

  1) With the help of a grid, carry out a screening activity

  2) Discuss the different elements of the scoping stage

• Discussion on the issues surrounding the practice in your own contexts