

2009 International Campbell Collaboration (C2) Colloquium

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Abstract Information

Abstract Title:

Using review methods for economic evaluation: Lessons from the social welfare field

Format:

Paper

Themes:

systematic review, economic evaluation

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Abstract:

The Campbell and Cochrane Economic Methods Group (CCEMG) recently published its policy brief outlining key issues concerning the use of review methods to inform economic evaluation. The brief covers the following policy areas; education, criminal justice and social welfare. The design of reviews in these areas must consider the variations between these policy areas, including differences in the available evidence base and the objectives of decision makers. This paper considers the implications of the different policy contexts for the way in which economic evaluations are undertaken. Using social welfare as the main point of reference, the paper asks, what are the challenges posed to economists by different policy areas, and what are the implications for using review methods to inform and undertake economic evaluation? The paper draws insights from two sources. First, work recently commissioned by the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) in the UK on how economic evaluation should be undertaken in the social care field, and methods for costing social care interventions. Second, papers presented to the workshop 'Evidence-based economics: Health and other policy areas' held in London in late 2008. The paper highlights the particular features of social welfare which require a distinct approach to the application of review methods in economic evaluation. Specifically they include; the complexity of the funding and delivery of social welfare, the centrality of service users and the personalisation agenda, the significant contribution of informal carers, the importance of fairness and efficiency, and the paucity of the economics evidence base. Each aspect is discussed and proposals made about how review and economics methods could be combined to respond to the features of social welfare and variation in other policy fields.
