

2009 International Campbell Collaboration (C2) Colloquium

Submitter Information

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Abstract Information

Abstract Title:

Methods for Considering the Social Determinants of Health: Recommendations for Campbell & Cochrane

Format:

Symposium

Themes:

Evidence for social welfare, evidence for education, evidence for crime and justice.

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Abstract:

Background: The Measurement and Evidence Knowledge Network of the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health identified six challenges to developing the evidence base on social determinants of health: 1) lack of precision in specifying causal pathways; 2) merging the causes of health improvement with the causes of health inequities; 3) lack of clarity about health gradients and health gaps; 4) inadequacies in descriptions of axes of social differentiation in populations; 5) the impact of context on interpreting evidence and on the concepts used to gather evidence; and 6) the problems of getting knowledge into action. Objectives: To develop recommendations, based on empiric evidence, for how these challenges can be met within the context of Cochrane and Campbell systematic reviews. Methods: We identified empiric evidence on how to meet these challenges for each step of the systematic review process, and developed recommendations for good methodological practice in systematic reviews, as well as recommendations for research needed to address gaps in our methods for building the evidence-base needed to assess equity in the context of systematic reviews. We held a workshop at the Campbell Colloquium in 2008 to discuss these challenges; participants were invited to share their comments and suggestions for good practice. Results: We found examples of systematic reviews which have developed and applied methods that address challenges in considering social determinants of health and developing an evidence base on how to enhance health equity. We classified this empiric evidence according to twelve stages of the systematic review process: 1. Question formulation; 2. Selection of study designs; 3. Selection of population; 4. Selection of eligible interventions; 5. Outcomes; 6. Searching; 7. Data extraction; 8. Process and implementation; 9. Quality assessment; 10. Data analysis and presentation; 11. Context; and 12. Applicability. Conclusions: From our literature review and workshop outcomes, we synthesize empiric evidence and suggest recommendations for good practice that focus on choosing methods appropriate to the question with consideration for causal influences of social determinants of health. Workshop Plan: We will present our final recommendations. We will invite participants to discuss how these can be implemented in Campbell reviews; participants will break into small groups for discussion, then return to plenary for presentation. We will specifically address the relevance for low- and middle-income countries.
