



Digital Story 1, Part 2

You don't know what you don't know

NCCMT

So, Beverly, you said that you had been to McMaster University and taken a course in critical appraisal...

PPH

Mhm.

NCCMT

...and yet, when you were gathering evidence to make a decision about the breastfeeding campaign, that critical appraisal piece didn't get done. I'm just wondering if you could explain why, even though you knew that perhaps that was the right thing to do, that it didn't happen.

PPH

So, yeah we didn't know we had to do it. And that's the point about you don't know what you don't know. That's the position that we were in as well-meaning Public Health practitioners but without enough knowledge to really do the job we wanted to do and needed to do, to really put a quality product out there. Because we knew from some of the focus group work that we'd done with our clients previous to this that they had a lot of confidence in Public Health. And they also expected us to give an unbiased message. In breastfeeding particularly there has been quite a lot of rhetoric on all sides of the question. And what we heard from our clients is that they didn't want us to engage in that. They wanted us to be sure that we had the best available information, the scientific information. Also we knew from those focus groups that parents are quite capable of making an informed decision but what they wanted from us was the facts so that they could make the informed decision. And what we found I guess through this process - our lesson - was that we had to be rigorous in bringing the best available science to the questions that our clientele have.

NCCMT

They were looking to you for the unbiased information.

PPH

They were. They wanted the unbiased stuff. And certainly I think that's what we were able to provide because, after we did this review, we then developed material for our website that explained, in lay persons' terms, what this research means on all those questions - on the obesity question, on the infection question. And there is a section even that's gone up since this work has been done about what it does mean about cognitive development and what it doesn't mean.