



A Model for Evidence-Informed Decision Making in Public Health



Evidence-informed decision making involves integrating the best available research evidence into the decision-making process. Additional factors – community health issues and local context; community and political preferences and actions; and public health resources – create the environment in which that research evidence is interpreted and applied.

This model for evidence-informed decision making in public health is particularly relevant at the fifth step of evidence-informed public health: Adapt the information to a local context. (see diagram on reverse)

This model recognizes that important evidence can come from a variety of sources. Evidence considered in the decision-making process could include the following possible examples:

<i>Sources of Evidence</i>	<i>Examples of Evidence for Consideration</i>
Evidence from research	The most relevant, high-quality qualitative or quantitative evidence available Research findings from a variety of disciplines and sectors relevant to public health
Evidence about the frequency, causes, and modifying factors of local community health issues	Surveillance data and community health status reports to determine the magnitude of the health issue in the local setting Significance and importance of the issue in comparison to other community health concerns
Evidence from people about community and political preferences and actions	Needs and interests of community members Support or opposition from the public and/or government officials Current political climate (local, regional, provincial, federal) Current organizational/corporate climate
Evidence from various governments and programs about public health resources	Financial resources Human resources (personnel/staffing, administrative support, support from management) Materials (workspace, computers, supplies)

No two public health situations are identical. The weight and influence that each factor will have on the decision-making process will depend upon the specific circumstances, as well as the skills and values held by the individuals and groups involved in the process. The placement of Public Health Expertise at the centre of the model is intentional. Ultimately, decision makers must draw on their explicit and tacit public health knowledge and expertise to incorporate all the relevant factors into the final decision, conclusion or recommendation.

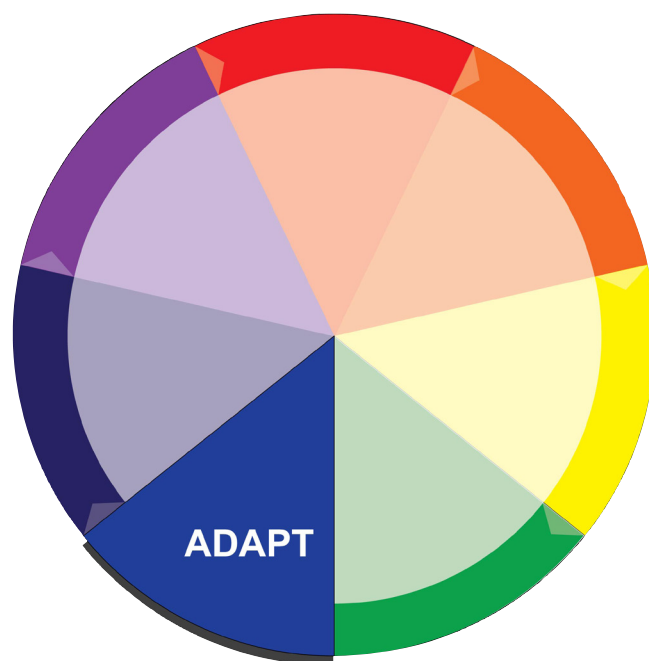
Faced with a lack of time, limited access to peer-reviewed journals, inadequate critical appraisal skills and conflicting evidence, public health professionals may not always use high quality, relevant research to inform their public health program and policy decisions. Sources of synthesized and methodologically strong research evidence can overcome some of these barriers. These sources save time and increase confidence in the value of the research findings. Evidence may include quantitative and qualitative research findings from a variety of disciplines relevant to public health (for example, epidemiology, allied health, social sciences and education). However the *best* research evidence available will be different for each public health situation.

Evidence-informed decision making in public health offers several potential benefits:

- adoption of the most effective and cost-efficient interventions;
- prudent use of scarce resources;
- better health outcomes for individuals and communities.

The NCCMT has developed a resource to help public health practitioners implement this model of evidence-informed decision making whether considering starting a new program or stopping an existing program : It worked there. Will it work here? Tool for Assessing Applicability and Transferability of Evidence. Two versions of the tool are available on the NCCMT website: A. When considering starting a new program. [<http://www.nccmt.ca/pubs/A&T-revised-startEN.pdf>] and B. When considering stopping an existing program. [<http://www.nccmt.ca/pubs/A&T-revised-stopEN.pdf>].

For more resources and information on evidence-informed decision making in public health, visit our website: www.nccmt.ca.



General References:

- Ciliska, D., Thomas, H., & Buffett, C. (2010). *An introduction to evidence-informed public health and a compendium of critical appraisal tools for public health practice* (Revised). Retrieved from the National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools: http://www.nccmt.ca/pubs/IntroEIPH_compendiumENG_web.pdf
- DiCenso, A., Ciliska, D., & Guyatt, G. (2005). Introduction to evidence-based nursing. In A. DiCenso, D. Ciliska, & G. Guyatt (Eds.), *Evidence-based nursing: A guide to clinical practice* (pp. 3-19). St. Louis, MO: Elsevier Mosby.

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