Evidence to Action: What We Can Do

James F Sallis, PhD
SBM Presidential Lecture Lecture
March 2017
Welcome to San Diego
Goals for this talk

- Explain “why research translation”
- Of course there are objections
- There are many options for action
- I ask you to be a spokesperson for your research
  – and to speak up for evidence-based decision making
This past year has seemed like living in a Dickens novel.
“IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES
IT WAS THE WORST OF TIMES”
It has been an Honor to serve As President Of SBM
Physical activity in relation to urban environments in 14 cities worldwide: a cross-sectional study

James F. Sallis, Esteban Cariño, Tony L. Conway, Marc A. Adams, Lawrence DFrank, Michael Pratt, Deborah Salvo, Jasper Schipperijn, Graham Smith, Keith L. Cave, Rachel Daisy, Jacqueline Kerr, Po-hui Chi, Jinfeng Li, Jing Jin, Rodrigo Kloos, Ullysses Guimarães, Graciela Schiaffino, John Brownson, Deffen Van Dyck, Rolf De Boer, and Neville Owen

Summary
Background Physical inactivity is a global pandemic responsible for over 5 million deaths annually through its effects on multiple non-communicable diseases. We aimed to document how objectively measured attributes of the urban environment are related to objectively measured physical activity, in an international sample of adults.

Methods We based our analyses on the International Physical Activity and Environment Network (IPEN) adult study, which was a coordinated, international, cross-sectional study. Participants were sampled from neighborhoods with varied levels of walkability and socioeconomic status. The present analyses of data from the IPEN adult study included 68,224 adults aged 18–66 years from 14 cities on ten countries on five continents. Indicators of walkability, public transport access, and park access were assessed in 1–2 km and 0.5–5 km street network buffers around each participant’s residential address with geographic information systems. Mean daily minutes of moderate-to-vigorous-intensity physical activity were measured with 4–7 days of accelerometer monitoring. Associations between environmental attributes and physical activity were estimated using generalised additive mixed models with gamma variance and logarithmic link functions.

THE LANCET

Physical Activity 2016: Progress and Challenges

“We urge all sectors of government and society to take immediate, bold actions to help make active living a more desired, affordable, and accessible choice for all population groups.”

THE LANCET

Urban design, transport, and health

“Systematic designing of cities to enhance health through active transport promises to be a powerful strategy for improvements in population health on a permanent basis.”

3 first-author Papers in Lancet And election to National Academy Of Medicine
However, I experienced the Trauma of the death of my wife, Shemi.
Please enjoy her art & see photos of her life.

www.shemiamarsisallis.com
A decade of knowledge translation research—what has changed?

Beverley J. Shea*

Community Interventions and Epidemiological Technologies (CIET Canada), Institute of Population Health, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) define KT as “the exchange, synthesis and ethically sound application of knowledge—within a complex system of interactions among researchers and users—to accelerate the capture of the benefits of research for society through improved health, more effective services and products, and a strengthened health care system” [5]. Straus et al.
Reasons for research translation

• I want my research to be used, to have impact, to improve health
• If I don’t communicate & translate my research, who will?
• Who knows my research better than me?
• It will be personally satisfying to see my research used in policy or practice
Objections to getting involved in research translation

• The evidence is not good enough to justify application
  – You would be surprised how many decisions are made on the basis of NO evidence
• It’s not my job. I need to stay objective, or I will lose credibility
  – Objectivity is a myth in applied research. We have passion. We do research to have impact.
• Policy work is not valued at my institution
  – Correct. You will have to do research translation for your own fulfillment and social support
Objections to getting involved in research translation

• I want my research to make a difference, but I don’t have the time, skills, or resources to get involved
  – Start small
  – Find a strategy that fits your time and skills
  – Let’s all advocate to universities and funders for more resources and support for research translation
The current situation makes it imperative for all of us to speak up for science.

**THE POST-TRUTH ERA?**

At the close of 2016, the Oxford English Dictionary declared “post-truth” its word of the year. The adjective is defined as “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.” But Earth and its breath — the climate — paid no heed. Nature had
Evidence-Based Policy Making? Who is speaking for evidence?

"We have a right to disagree with facts"
The first paragraph continues . . .

• . . . it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief [GREAT SCIENCE], it was the epoch of incredulity [REJECTION OF SCIENCE], it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair . . .
All of us need to defend science. See Sherry Pagoto’s piece in Chronicle of Higher Education.
How to Do Research Translation

Original Article

Translating active living research into policy and practice: One important pathway to chronic disease prevention

Billie Giles-Corti\textsuperscript{a,\*}, James F. Sallis\textsuperscript{b}, Takemi Sugiyama\textsuperscript{a,\textasthema}, Lawrence D. Frank\textsuperscript{d}, Melanie Lowe\textsuperscript{a}, and Neville Owen\textsuperscript{a,\textasthema}
STEPS IN POLICY RELEVANT RESEARCH
Giles-Corti et al. J Public Health Policy

Partners:
- Researcher
- Policy makers, practitioners
- Community

Strategies:
- Gaps in the evidence-base
- Links to policy
- Relevance to community
- Work in collaboration with policy makers

- Best practice
  - Natural experiments
  - Economic benefits
  - Co-benefits for other sectors
  - Specific policy recommendations

- Publications
  - Presentations
  - Policy briefings & guidelines for practitioners
  - Presentations to policy makers
  - Briefs
  - Direct to policy maker
  - Advocate acts as knowledge broker

- Policy & practice implications communicated
  - One-to-one lobbying
  - Briefing presentations
  - Mass media/PR activities
  - Internal advocacy within agency/organization

- Support from multiple sectors
- Sufficient evidence-base to warrant policy
What kinds of evidence do policy makers value?

• Petticrew conducted interviews with decision makers about research.
• They said researchers did not understand the policy-making process, especially time constraints and how political pressure outweighs evidence.
• Stories and case studies are more compelling than rigorous studies.
• They valued evaluations of real-world interventions—natural experiments.
• Cost and cost-effectiveness analyses were high priorities.
• Decision makers called for research that was designed to assist them in making decisions.

• *J Epidemiol Community Health* 2004; 58: 811–16.
Paths to Research Translation

- Researchers
- Evidence
  - Quality
  - Relevance
- Public Opinion
- Policy Makers (Gov’t, NGOs)
- Business, Consumers
- Practitioners
Paths to Research Translation

- Researchers
  - Social media
  - Lay summary
  - Press release

- Public Opinion
  - Op-ed
  - Briefs
  - Know. Broker Relationships

- Policy Makers
  - Gov’t, NGOs

- Practitioners
  - Start-up
  - License
  - Consult

- Business, Consumers
  - Briefs
  - Guidelines
  - Webinars

EVIDENCE
- Quality
- Relevance

Know.
Brokers
Relationships

Publish
Present

Start-up
License
Consult
Research Is Needed to Inform All These Pathways

• Business
  – Business decision making; market research
• Practitioners
  – Implementation research
• Policy makers
  – How to communicate effectively
• Public opinion
  – Moving from attitude to advocacy actions
SBM and Partner Organizations Are Prioritizing Research Translation

• SBM as an organization is very engaged
  – Translational Behavioral Medicine!
  – Policy briefs. 3 more released today
  – Policy Committee and Policy Council
  – Scientific & Professional Liaison Council partners
  – Board of Directors annual visits to Congress

• OBSSR identified communication with the public as 1 of its 3 strategic priorities

• RWJF grants and training emphasize impact
Two priorities for advocacy

• Communicate your research to practitioners and policy makers who can put it into practice
  – This requires having findings ready for translation
• Especially in these times of attacks on science, we all need to defend science and educate everyone about the value of science
My Ask: Take a Step Toward Research Translation

• Communicate your research through lay summary, op-ed, letter to editor, social media
• Propose a brief through your SIG
• Join a local or national advocacy group & share your research
• Develop relationship with knowledge broker
• Develop relationship with a decision maker
  – Elected rep, agency staff, corporate leader
• CALL your US Senator and Representative in support of NIH and science in general. They will notice
THANK YOU!