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Training Toolkit 12: Policy Proposal Writing

Training New Trainers

Building an evidence-based case for health policy: Trainer Notes

- As preparation participants might read
  - Bridging the Gap a report of a WHO meeting
  - And refer to the Health Evidence Network
  - At http://www.euro.who.int/HEN
- This material can be modified and improved
- And tailored to meet your training needs

Building an Evidence Based Case for Health Policy Action

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- "There is nothing politicians like so little as to be well informed - because it makes decision-making so complicated and difficult"
  - Robert Skidelsky quoting John Maynard Keynes
- Health advocates <u>make the case for</u> decisions…
  - That is they prepare moral and factual evidence for…
- Political decision <u>takers</u>
  - Who have the authority, often as politicians to decide

Health Evidence Network (HEN)

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- HEN attempts to bridge the gap between research and policy by providing
  - answers to policy questions in the form of evidence-based reports and summaries; and
  - easy access to evidence and information from a number of web sites, databases and documents.
  - Review the site and discuss how you use it
  - At http://www.euro.who.int/HEN

Three components of Public Health Decisions

Values of the population

Evidence

Needs of the population

Choice
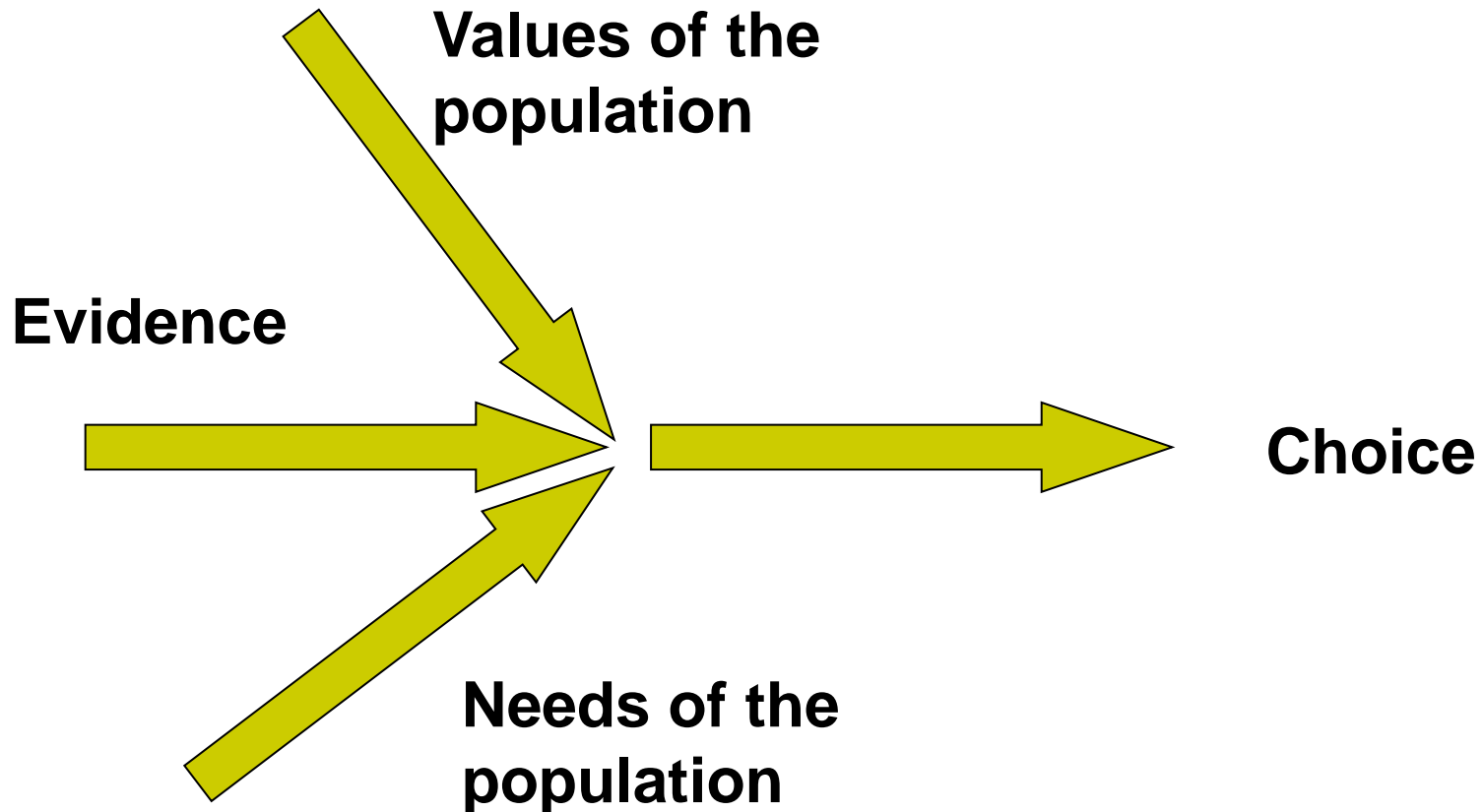
1. Find the evidence

- Find the best available evidence;
  - Preferably a systematic review
- Evidence is mainly knowledge from research, but remember there are other sorts of knowledge
  1. Knowledge from data (statistics and case reports)
  2. Values of the public (support for the moral case)
  3. Understanding from experience of work in the field

2. Assess the needs of the population

1. List all the other problems that affect the population or the subgroup of the population
2. Assess the burden of disease; i.e. number of people affected x the impact on each
3. Consider the opportunity costs
   1. How could current resources be better used
   2. How else could resources required in future be used
   3. What would happen if nothing changes
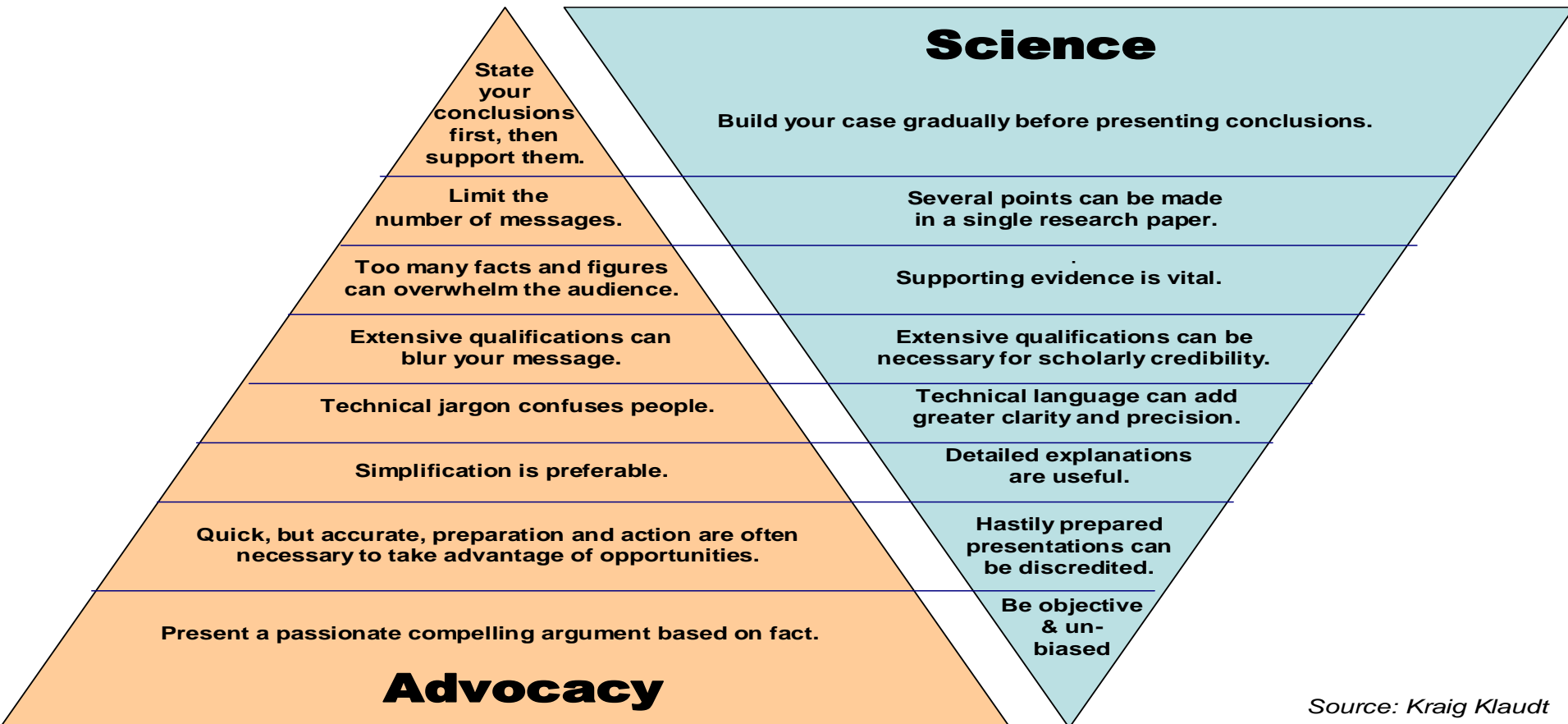
3. Weigh up the values

- Set out any policy priorities
  - e.g. rural health, or equity
- Score the options against the policy principles using a simple scale e.g.
  - 0 no relationship
  - + relationship
  - ++ strong relationship

Science and Advocacy Reports

- Advocacy and science reports must both be honest
- Science reports explore the evidence
  - They avoid value judgements
  - Examine many different approaches
  - Technical precision is vital so jargon is inevitable
  - And avoid single conclusions for action
- Advocacy reports argue a case based on evidence
  - Based on a value perspective
  - And a selected approach to the problem
  - Clear communication and simple language is needed
  - They must reach clear conclusions for action

Science or Advocacy?

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Differences between advocacy & scientific communication

Science

Build your case gradually before presenting conclusions.

Several points can be made in a single research paper.

Supporting evidence is vital.

Extensive qualifications can be necessary for scholarly credibility.

Technical language can add greater clarity and precision.

Detailed explanations are useful.

Hastily prepared presentations can be discredited.

Be objective & un-biased

Advocacy

State your conclusions first, then support them.

Limit the number of messages.

Too many facts and figures can overwhelm the audience.

Extensive qualifications can blur your message.

Technical jargon confuses people.

Simplification is preferable.

Quick, but accurate, preparation and action are often necessary to take advantage of opportunities.

Present a passionate compelling argument based on fact.

Source: Kraig Klaudt

Making the Case for Health: Tips on Report Writing for Advocacy

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- Know your audience !
  - Listen to what they want to know,
  - Use their language in a simple and direct way
- Know your own mind !
  - Be clear about your own values and priorities
  - And why you reached your conclusion
  - So be prepared to state what people need to know
- Know the evidence !
  - Gather the evidence and present it objectively
  - But show how you reached your conclusion.

Making the Case for Health:
Tips on Advocacy Report Writing

- Keep the structure simple e.g.
  1. Summary and conclusion
     1. A is the problem, for which we propose B solution. C,D and E are main the reasons we propose B, this will require F resources and produce G outcome
  2. This is the evidence and impact of the problem A
  3. This is the evidence for C,D and E (separate sections)
  4. This is how we will put it into practice (with examples).
  5. The resources required for this will be F
  6. The outcome will be G (describe and value\0.

- Short reports are much more likely to be read

- Examples are more powerful than abstractions.

Making the Case for Health: Writing reports for Policy Making

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- Participants should read the Plain English guides
  - Writing in Plain English, Report Writing and Medical Information
  - **reproduced with permission of the Plain English Campaign**
- Bring examples of good and bad reports
- Explain why you consider the reports are likely to be effective or ineffective

Making the Case for Health:
Good and Bad Examples

Discuss examples of reports identify

- The good points
    - Concise
    - To the point
    - Clear simple language
    - Clear line of argument
    - Based on evidence
    - Provides examples
    - Simple structure
    - Clear conclusion
    - Identifiable voice
    - Other

- The bad points
    - Too long
    - Does not address question
    - Obscure jargon
    - Confused or missing argument
    - Based on assertions
    - Only generalities
    - Complicated
    - No clear outcome
    - Nameless official voice
    - Other

Reflections and Feedback

- Please discuss and write down
  - What you have learnt that you found helpful
  - What you will do differently as a result of today
  - What you will improve when you give this course

  - Thank you

Module contributed by Sir Muir Gray and Graham Lister

- Sir Muir Gray CBE, DSc, MD, FRCP, FRCPS Glas FCILIP was Director of Clinical Knowledge, Process and Safety. He is the author of Evidence-Based Healthcare, joint author of The Oxford Handbook of Public Health Practice, and "Sod Seventy" a trenchant guide to wellbeing in later years.

- Graham Lister was chair of a charity which provided information to patients, led work on the national strategy for NHS Direct and the Information Management and Technology Strategies for the NHS and the WHO Knowledge Management for Public Health (KM4PH) initiative.