

Measuring the Value of Public Health through Practice-Based Research Networks (PBRNs)

Conference Track: The Value of Public Health Interventions

Session Description: In an era of constrained economic resources, public health agencies increasingly are challenged to document the health and economic benefits of their work and to justify resource allocation decisions based on evidence of impact and value. Most agencies, however, do not have all of the resources and expertise needed to mount rigorous, comparative studies of their operations. Practice-based research networks (PBRNs) provide a model for public health agencies to collaborate with researchers in designing and implementing studies that produce this type of evidence in real-world practice settings. This session presents early experiences from a new initiative supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to develop public health PBRNs. The developers of new PBRNs in Massachusetts, Colorado, and Washington will describe the motivations behind their networks, the roles played by practitioners and researchers within these collaborations, the types of interventions and practices identified for study, and the general approaches used to assess value and impact in public health practice.

Practical Application: At the end of this session, participants will be able to (1) describe practical steps for organizing or participating in a public health PBRN; (2) discuss alternative approaches for designing PBRN studies to support inferences about value and impact in public health practice; (3) identify ways in which findings from PBRN studies can be used within the policy and practice communities to demonstrate value; and (4) identify strategies for sustaining PBRN activities over time.

Panelists:

Harold Cox, MSSW, Associate Dean for Public Health Practice, Boston University School of Public Health

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