



Supporting Policy In health with Research:
an Intervention Trial



SPIRIT

Supporting Policy In health with Research: an Intervention Trial

Protocol and early findings

Dr Anna Williamson
Director, CIPHER



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEW SOUTH WALES



SPIRIT collaborators

Chief Investigators:

- Prof Sally Redman, *Sax Institute*
- Prof Louisa Jorm, *University of Western Sydney and Sax Institute*
- Prof Sally Green, *Australasian Cochrane Centre, Monash University*
- Prof Cate D'Este, *University of Newcastle*
- Ms Deborah Frew, *NSW Ministry of Health*
- Prof Anthony Shakeshaft, *National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of NSW*
- Prof Rob Sanson-Fisher, *Priority Research Centre for Health Behaviour, University of Newcastle*
- Prof Huw Davies, *University of St Andrews, Scotland*
- Prof Jordan Louviere, *Institute for Choice, University of South Australia*

Associate Investigators:

- Prof Alex Barrett, *University of Sydney*
- Dr Terry Flynn, *Centre for the Study of Choice at the University of Technology Sydney*
- A/Prof Mary Haines, *Cancer Institute NSW*
- Dr Denise O'Connor, *Institute of Health Services Research, Monash University*
- Ms Sarah Thackway, *Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Ministry of Health*
- Mr Andrew Milat, *Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Ministry of Health*
- A/Prof Fiona Blyth – *University of Sydney and Sax Institute*
- Dr Stacy Carter, *Centre for Values, Ethics and the Law in Medicine, University of Sydney*

CIPHER staff: Anna Williamson, Director CIPHER; Abby Haynes, Research Officer CIPHER; Steve Makkar, Postdoctoral Research Fellow CIPHER; Emma Darsana, Study Coordinator SPIRIT; Sian Rudge, Director Knowledge Exchange; Sue Brennan Postdoctoral Research Fellow CIPHER; Nicola Lewis; Tari Turner; Danielle Campbell; Daniel Barker

Evidence from research can inform policy

“Evidence is crucial to good public policy in two respects:

- it helps policymakers work out which policy options are likely to achieve the best results
- it helps in getting a policy implemented in circumstances where there is opposition to it.”

Gary Banks, Chairman

Productivity Commission 2011

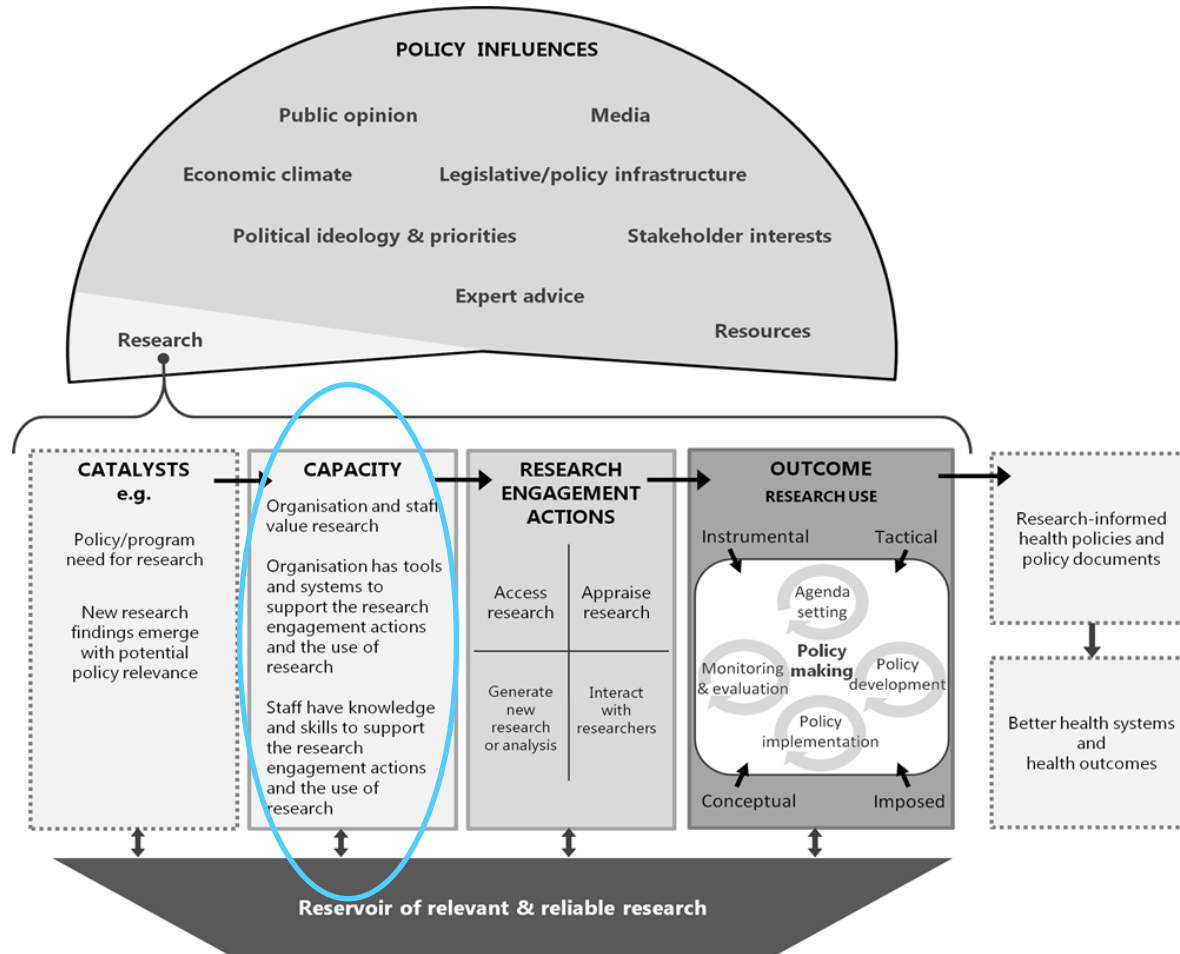
Rationale

- Many opportunities to use evidence from research in policy are missed
- Many papers describing views and opinions about how research influences policy
- Few rigorous empirical tests of the impact of strategies in increasing the use of research in policy: 5 studies located by recent review.
Moore et al. *Evidence & Policy* 2011; 7(3): 251-279.

SPIRIT is...

- A stepped wedge trial in 6 agencies testing the impact of a multifaceted, tailored intervention program
- Funded by NHMRC through a Centre for Research Excellence Grant known as CIPHER (Centre for Informing Policy in Health with Evidence from Research)

The SPIRIT Action Framework



Aims

1. To test whether SPIRIT results in an increase in **capacity** to use research
2. To test whether SPIRIT results in an increase in the **actions** and **use of** research
3. To describe the **implementation** of SPIRIT
4. To examine **how SPIRIT worked**

Measures

Outcome measures

- **Online survey:** How do staff access and engage with research?
- **Interview with senior staff member:** How is the use of research supported at the organisational level?
- **Interviews about policy/program documents:** Do the documents an agency produces use findings from research?

Process evaluation

Mixed-method including structured observations, in-depth interviews and informal conversations, log sheets and cost analyses.

SPiRiT is a stepped wedge trial designed to test strategies to increase the capacity of organisations to use research evidence

| | Measures 1 <i>(0 months)</i> | Measures 2 <i>(6 months)</i> | Measures 3 <i>(12 months)</i> | Measures 4 <i>(18 months)</i> | Measures 5 <i>(24 months)</i> | Measures 6 <i>(30 months)</i> |
|-----------------|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| AGENCY 1 | Dark Green | Dark Green | Light Green | Light Green | Light Green | Light Green |
| AGENCY 2 | Dark Green | Dark Green | Light Green | Light Green | Light Green | Light Green |
| AGENCY 3 | Light Green | Dark Green | Dark Green | Light Green | Light Green | Light Green |
| AGENCY 4 | Light Green | Dark Green | Dark Green | Light Green | Light Green | Light Green |
| AGENCY 5 | Light Green | Light Green | Dark Green | Dark Green | Light Green | Light Green |
| AGENCY 6 | Light Green | Light Green | Dark Green | Dark Green | Light Green | Light Green |

Agency sample

- Sydney based agencies were eligible to participate if:
 - A significant proportion of their work was in health
 - At least 20 staff members were involved in policy or program design, development or evaluation
 - The Chief Executive indicated an interest in participating
- Using publicly available lists:
 - Eligible agencies were identified and ranked
 - The first six agencies were approached and all consented

Participants

| | N | Consent rate (%) |
|----------|-----|------------------|
| Agency 1 | 25 | 64 |
| Agency 2 | 34 | 69 |
| Agency 3 | 16 | 53 |
| Agency 4 | 35 | 55 |
| Agency 5 | 24 | 80 |
| Agency 6 | 17 | 52 |
| TOTAL | 151 | 62 |

Participating in SPIRIT

1. Agency X completes baseline measures
2. Leaders attend feedback session about the data and nominate priorities:

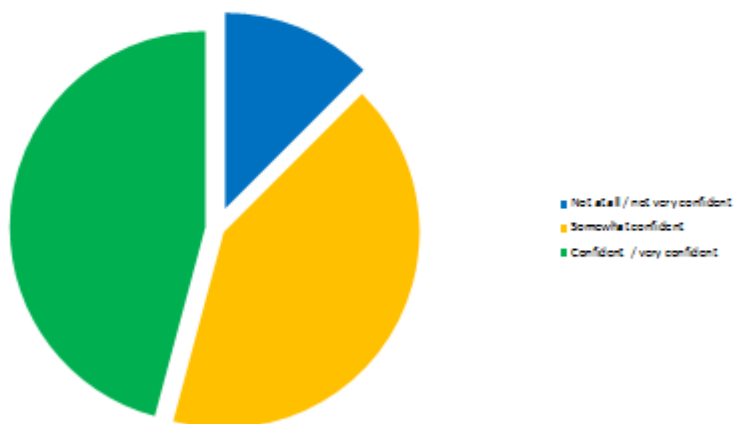
Our summary

- Research evidence is seen as important by X. X interacts with researchers and research expertise in many diverse ways.
- There are some systems in place to support the use of research evidence; there may be opportunities to strengthen the support in some areas.
- Many staff are confident in the capacity to find and use research and do so regularly; some, possibly more junior staff, less so.
- There may be value in strengthening capacity for:
 - (a) Appraising the quality and relevance of research
 - (b) Evaluating programs.

Agency X reflects on this feedback and uses it to select a range of SPIRIT activities e.g.

Confidence in appraising research

Staff are expected to be able to appraise research



Agency X chooses a skills-building symposia on appraisal

An overview of SPIRIT components

| SPIRIT components | Example content / activity |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Audit, feedback & goal-setting | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leaders select SPIRIT components and topics |
| 2. Leadership program | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leaders discuss how to build research capacity |
| 3. Agency support for research | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff are given access to Web CIPHER |
| 4. Skills development symposia * | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff attend workshops on evaluation |
| 5. Access to research/ers * | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff discuss priority topics with experts |
| 6. Systems for generating research * | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organisations receive tailored literature reviews |

* = *Adaptable topics, content and presenters*

Early findings from Round One measures




Respondents' confidence in their skills and knowledge...

| | Confident or very confident |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| To find research | 57% |
| Evaluate the quality of research | 43% |
| Interpret the results | 48% |
| Design evaluations | 34% |




Research engagement in the past six months...

- 77% had searched for reviews of research
- 63% had appraised the appropriateness of methods
- 47% had undertaken or participated in an internally conducted research project or analysis of data
- 29% had consulted with researchers regarding the interpretation of research

Organisational approaches differ

| |  |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|
| Do your policies on how to develop policies or programs encourage or require research use? | Yes, very much so | Yes, to some extent | No |
| Does your organisation provide access to training for staff in how to access research, appraise and apply research? | No | Yes, very much so | No |
| In the last 6 months, has your organisation undertaken internal research to support policy development, implementation, evaluation? | No | Yes, very much so | Yes, very much so |

Staff views differ

| |  % |  % |  % |
|--|--|--|--|
| It is usually or always expected that policies or programs will be evaluated | 89 | 93 | 34 |
| Interaction with researchers or research organisations is usually or always encouraged | 96 | 25 | 44 |

Next steps

- The 'active' intervention period for the last pair of agencies concludes at the end of this year.
- The last round of measures collection commences April 2015.

Further information

- The CIPHER Investigators. **Supporting Policy In health with Research: an Intervention Trial (SPIRIT): Study Protocol.** *BMJ Open* 2014;4:e005293 doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2014-005293 .
- Abby Haynes, Tari Turner, Sally Redman, Andrew Milat, Gabriel Moore, Huw Davies and the CIPHER team. **“A rose by any other name”: Developing definitions for a knowledge exchange intervention in policy and program organisations .** *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 2014; DOI: 10.1080/13645579.2014.921457
- Emma Quinn, Carmen Huckel-Schneider, Danielle Campbell, Holly Seale and Andrew J Milat. **How can knowledge exchange portals assist in knowledge management for evidence-informed decision making in public health?** *BMC Public Health* 2014, 14:443.

Anna.williamson@saxinstitute.org.au