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Impact of HIAs in the U.S.

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Plenary: State of HIA Practice & Impacts
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Protecting Health, Saving Lives—*Millions at a Time*

Background

- Monitoring and evaluation often viewed as final stage of HIA
- Three types: process, impacts, outcomes
- Impact evaluation, asks:
 - Whether and to what degree HIA recommendation were adopted and implemented?
 - How did the HIA influence the decision-making process?
 - Were new inter-agency collaborations built?
 - Impacts on stakeholders?
 - Did awareness of previously unrecognized health considerations change?



Background

- Some cases impact of a HIA is clear-cut
 - Example: Alaska oil and gas recommendations drafted in collaboration with the decision-maker, Bureau of Land Management, were formally adopted as mitigation measures (Wernham and colleagues, 1997)
- Other cases it is challenging to attribute a particular decision to the influence of a HIA
 - Particularly for the policy ones; enacted legislation consistent with the HIA recommendations, but no evaluation data to determine role of HIA
- Limited empirical data



Our Research

- Partnership between Johns Hopkins, Pew, CDC
- Identified HIAs between 1999 and July 2010
- Information from HIA reports and other supporting documents such as peer-reviewed papers
- Conducted semi-structured interviews
- Transcribed, validated & coded audio files
- Thematic analyses were conducted using NVIVO 9 to identify impacts, factors associated with impacts, and the importance of context within and across the HIAs in our sample



What Did We Learn?

- 73 HIAs identified, we successfully contacted 25 HIA practitioners associated with 60 HIAs conducted in 15 different U.S. states
- Main themes:
 - Information about the process: how, who, scope, goals
 - Definitions of success
 - HIA recommendations (why adopted and why not adopted)
 - Impacts (factors, both direct and indirect)
 - Failures and challenges
 - Importance of timing
 - Stakeholders (community involvement, role of decision-makers)
 - Cost (time, staff, money)
 - Training
 - Advocacy



Conclusions

- HIAs have had several positive impacts and benefits
- Identified ways to increase likelihood that health is considered part of decision-making
- HIAs most effective at increasing awareness of health and/or social determinants of health when HIA process is inclusive, balanced in the assessment, and transparent
- Valuable information from the practitioner; need perspectives from policymakers and decision-makers (we are doing this now!)



A Few Challenges for the Field

- Timeliness of decision-making, especially for policy HIAs
- HIA practitioners often not part of the decision-making process, so how to effectively engage the decision-maker upfront
- Ensuring effective and broad communication of HIA findings
- Need for both self-evaluation of HIA process and impacts, and independent external evaluation



Final Thought

- “Evaluation is important for the quality of individual HIAs and for the success of the HIA field as a whole. It is not reasonable to expect decision-makers to adopt HIA widely in the absence of evidence of its effectiveness and value. Consequently, the committee [National Academies Committee on HIA] concludes that the lack of evaluation is a barrier that will need to be overcome if HIA practice is to be advanced in the United States.”
 - National Academies Committee Conclusions Regarding Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011.



Thank you!

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