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Research utilisation within graduated licensing policy

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Introduction

- Novice drivers are a serious global public health issue, with road trauma a leading cause of death of young people
- Graduated licensing systems provide an overarching strategy to minimise novice driver trauma by reducing their exposure to high risk driving environments
- Critical graduated licensing components include age, alcohol/mobile phone restrictions



Introduction

- Due to the emotive nature of novice driver trauma, there is considerable media, community and political interest in graduated licensing policy debates
- Many controversial, yet likely effective components have not been introduced in many states and countries
- There exists a problematic gap between graduated licensing research and policy



Aims

- To identify the main barriers to research utilisation in graduated licensing policy
- To identify enabling strategies to encourage increased research utilisation

Study Design

- 48 interviews conducted between 2007 and 2009 with policy actors involved in the partial introduction of night-time and/or peer-passenger restrictions in NSW, VIC, QLD, WA, PA (and Washington DC)
- Domestic and international comparison to generate broad generalisations

Why night-time and peer-passenger restrictions?

- These policy debates and processes generated significant community, media and political attention
- Effective yet widely opposed
- Identical evaluation research used by decision-makers to create a diverse array of policy models

Sample

- Purposive sample
- Politicians, public servants, insurance/motoring organisation reps, journalists, researchers and various professional advocates
- Triangulation of data
- 84% response rate

Interview Schedule

- Adapted from the 'RAPID Context, Evidence, Links Framework for Analysis' (Start and Hovland 2004)
- Research: demand, opportunities for exchange and input into policymaking structures, quality, dissemination strategies, utilisation barriers and facilitators

An 'evidence-informed' culture

- Fosters considerable policy actor demand for research
- Considerable opportunity for research exchange between policy actors due to the existence of extensive networks and inclusive policymaking structures
- Research used 'instrumentally' and 'tactically' (Wiess 1979)

Barriers to research utilisation

- Bureaucratic 'filtering' of research information
- Poor quality evaluation research due to inappropriate funding models
- Potentially problematic movement towards less accessible research outputs
- Ill-informed media reportage and community perceptions

Enabling strategies

- Funding of larger, higher quality studies
- Financial incentives for researchers to further engage in the policy sphere
- Appropriate research dissemination to policymakers
- Effective media advocacy

Conclusion

- Despite the existence of an 'evidence-informed' policymaking culture and extensive links between policy actors, research utilisation in Australian and United States graduated licensing policy is similarly mediated by several factors
- The presentation and framing of research for policymakers and the community is critical

Health policy implications

- Research is only one element of the 'public policymaking puzzle'
- The style of research dissemination largely determines its influence on policy
- Researcher use of effective dissemination strategies may encourage evidence-based policy decisions in other public health settings

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