



Evidence and
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Behavioural and Implementation
Science Interventions
Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine



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#258 - Government-led interventions for healthier populations: Successful policy and implementation strategies

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Objectives/aims

The Healthier Societies for Healthy Populations initiative (convened by WHO's Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research; the Government of Sweden; and the Wellcome Trust) aims to address complex public health challenges, such as communicable and non-communicable diseases and health inequities. One starting point is to build understanding of the characteristics of successful government-led interventions to understand policy implementation strategies and enable translation of evidence-based programs to support healthier populations. To this end, this study explored five purposefully sampled, successful public health initiatives: 1) front-of-package warnings on food labels containing high sugar, sodium or saturated fat (Chile); 2) healthy food initiatives (trans fats, calorie labelling, cap on beverage size; New York); 3) the alcohol sales and transport ban during COVID-19 (South Africa); 4) the Vision Zero road safety initiative (Sweden) and 5) establishment of the Thai Health Promotion Foundation.

Methods

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The review utilised established methodologies including rapid reviews and practice interviews to synthesise knowledge. This study adapted these methods and conducted a series of "mini-reviews" focusing on government-led interventions with documented successful outcomes in promoting healthier populations. Positive examples were selected in consultation with Healthier Societies for Healthy Populations group (authors AN, RM and SD shortlisted candidates based on their involvement with meetings). Five purposefully selected examples represented different geographical regions, included low- and middle-income countries and addressed key population health issues (tobacco and alcohol use, obesity and preventable injuries). Interviews were conducted with key-leaders involved in the development, adoption, and dissemination of the successful public health initiatives through key policy changes. Interviews focused on gathering high-level reflections the intervention including success factors and barriers to implementation. A literature scan using Google Scholar search strings informed by the interviews identified relevant articles in consultation with a specialist librarian. The analysis examined cross-cutting themes within the examples, specifically identifying barriers and facilitators to successful interventions across different interventions and settings. Key themes and information on the intervention characteristics were consolidated into short reports for each example.

Main findings

This study presents an innovative approach to identifying the facilitators and barriers in successful government-led interventions for healthier populations. Thematic analysis of interviews and relevant studies across five examples revealed key facilitators, such as political leadership, public education, multifaceted approaches, stable funding, and opposition planning. Barriers included industry opposition, complex public health challenges, and inadequate interagency coordination. Expanding this global portfolio with additional examples will deepen our understanding of success factors and failures over time in this critical area. Ultimately, this comprehensive portfolio will empower practitioners to address pressing public health challenges worldwide.

The author team hope to spark reflections and suggestions for further development of this approach. This talk will encourage audience members to discuss their own reflections of successful government-led interventions through think-pair-share. Audience members will be asked to 1) think about the how presented policies and implementation strategies match or differ from their own experience and how they might be adapted within their own context, 2) pair or group up with others and share their reflections, 3) if comfortable, share back with the larger group.

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