Policy Advocacy One Step at a Time: Achievements, Challenges and Lessons Learned by Public Health Associations

Presentation at the Translating Academic Research to Achieve Healthy People & Healthy Environments Workshop

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Purpose & Outline

Purpose:
To share information about the role of public health associations (PHA) in policy advocacy/influence

Presentation Outline:
• Introduction to PHAs & the WFPHA

• PHAs and Policy Advocacy: advocacy strategies, approaches & achievements

• Challenges and Lessons Learned

• The Capetown workshop: moving forward

• Quo vadis?
Advocacy: What is it?

Advocacy: to support, plead or defend a cause

- An act of promoting a viewpoint/position
- Directly shaping opinion and action for the PHA
- Shift opinion & action » influencing policy and practice
- Countering misinformation
- A claim or act of legitimization on an issue

- Differs from information, education & communications
Some days, advocacy can feel like this….
Public Health Association: What is it?

The independent, non-governmental authoritative civil society voice about and for public health.

- Voluntary membership
- Multidisciplinary
- Focus on public health from a population health perspective
- Politically non-partisan
- Reach beyond health professions
PHAs and NCD Prevention

- Tobacco Control
- Social Determinants of Health
- Prevention of the Non-communicable diseases
- Environmental Health
- Public Health Education & Training
- Health Equity
- Access to primary health care (e.g., Universal Health Coverage)
- Maternal, newborn and child health (including reproductive health)
- Public health law and regulations
- Nutrition/Food security
- Infectious disease prevention & control (including HIV/AIDS)
- Public health emergency preparedness (disaster risk management)
- Immunization
- Mental Health
- Psychoactive Substances & Addiction
- Water supply & sanitation
- Healthy ageing
- Access to high quality medicines and medical equipment/devices
- Digital technologies for health
- Oral Health

Values range from 3.0 to 4.5.
Annual Report of the World Federation of Public Health Associations

Public Health Associations

Making a Difference

Canadian Public Health Association
Advocacy Examples (1)
Canadian Public Health Association
Advocacy Examples (2)

New Position Statements

Global Change and Human Health – Ecological Determinants of Health

Public Health Perspective on Sex Work in Canada
Canadian Public Health Association
Advocacy Examples (3)

Accomplishments

- Greater visibility
- Contribution to public discourse/action
- Policy influence
- Member engagement
- Increased stakeholder engagement
- Increased invitations to various “tables”
- Greater internal policy capacity
PHA Survey Findings/Lessons

- PHAs want to be actively involved in policy advocacy & engagement with governments
- Need to develop policy development & advocacy skills and organizational capacity
- Need to share experiences and seek active mentoring by more experienced PHAs
- Lack of skills-building policy development & advocacy resources
- How to measure advocacy effectiveness and policy influence?
Policy Advocacy: Challenges

• Fallout from advocacy - assessing “risk” while trying to maintain visibility – rationing our “political capital”
• Defining priority areas & focusing attention on a few key areas (focus, realism)
• External “push” to be involved
• Learning to say “no”
• Make new alliances
• Expectations about making a difference
Policy Advocacy: Challenges

- Finding and generating the evidentiary base
- Policy analysis, development and advocacy skills
- Dedicated human resources (staff & volunteers)
- Democratic space
- Resistance of governments to listen and act in the public interest (political and personal agenda) – ignore evidence, dumbing-down civil services, etc
- Power of opposing camps
WFPHA & Policy Advocacy

- 40 resolutions
- 7 Declarations
- WHO submissions
- Policy Influence?
Increasing Capacity for Public Health Policy Development & Advocacy in Africa
Capetown, South Africa: September 24, 2014
Purpose

• Increase understanding of the ‘do’s and don’ts’ in public health policy engagement (development & advocacy)

Desired Outputs

• to share knowledge about successes and challenges related to policy development and advocacy by PHAs in Africa
• to design an action plan and to obtain buy-in from national PHAs in Africa to begin building an evidence base and a policy advocacy campaign
• to provide feedback to AFPHA and WFPHA about what support is needed by PHAs with respect to policy development and advocacy (e.g., proposed WFPHA policy development and advocacy resource toolkit)
What happened?

• Used issue of falsified/falsely-labeled medicines as case study
• 35 participants representing 5 African countries, AFPHA and WFPHA

Achievements

• A commitment from PHAs and the WFPHA to work together to begin assembling country-based evidence about the extent of the falsely-labeled and falsified medicine situation and an environmental scan as to what is being done to address the issue
• Joint AFPHA/WFPHA communiqué on issue
• Additional policy development/advocacy capacity enhancement initiatives to be undertaken by WFPHA
Where do we go from here?

- Skills-building policy development & advocacy for PHAs (WFPHA Fellowship, workshops, tool kit)
- Identification of issues for PHAs (individually, partnerships, EUPHA & AFPHA)
- PH policy advocacy at global level (WFPHA & WHA)
- Move forward to develop policy positions and advocacy strategies
- Measuring progress/effectiveness & accountability/transparency
Leadership in Public Health

A guide to *advocacy* for public health associations

Thank you

Merci

Namaste