

The Norwegian Satellite of the Cochrane Effective Practice and Organisation of Care (EPOC) Group

Improving lives by supporting well-informed decisions about health systems in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC)

Systematic reviews for health systems in LMIC

The Norwegian Satellite of the Cochrane Effective Practice and Organisation of Care (EPOC) group prepares and supports use of reliable summaries (systematic reviews) of the best available research evidence that answers important questions relevant to health systems in LMIC. These include questions about how to deliver, finance and govern health services and how to implement health policies that are effective, efficient and equitable.

Examples include reviews of the effects of:

- Lay health workers in primary and community health care for maternal and child health and the management of infectious diseases
- Interventions for increasing the proportion of health professionals practising in underserved communities
- User fees on access to health services in LMIC
- Paying for performance to improve the delivery of health interventions in LMIC
- Interventions for improving coverage of child immunization in LMIC



Helping policy makers

In order to achieve universal and equitable access to health care, improve the quality of health care, and use

health care resources wisely, policy makers need to make well-informed decisions. Unfortunately, health policies are often not well-informed by research evidence. Poorly informed decision-making is one of several reasons why services fail to reach those most in need and goals such as the Millennium Development Goals for maternal and child health are not met. EPOC reviews have helped policy makers to make well-informed decisions in:

- WHO guidelines, such as [Guidelines for optimizing health worker roles for maternal and newborn health](#)



- [Policy briefs and dialogues](#) in African countries that address problems such as improving access to skilled attendance at delivery and reducing maternal mortality

The Secretary General of the Ministry of Health in Burkina Faso noted in a policy dialogue that

“the use of scientific evidence to inform decision-making, policy formulation and health programmes is a good practice to promote in order to enhance the performance of our health care system”

The Director of Planning of the Ministry of Health promised on behalf of the Secretary General that

“the results of this work, including policy options proposed in the policy brief will be accepted and implemented by the Ministry of Health to reduce maternal mortality, in order to achieve MDG 5 in 2015”

Building capacity

The Norwegian EPOC Satellite provides support to authors in LMIC and serves as the editorial base for systematic reviews that address health system questions



What is a systematic review?

A summary of studies addressing a clearly formulated question that uses systematic and explicit methods to identify, select, and critically appraise the relevant research, and to collect and analyse data from the included studies.

The Cochrane Collaboration

The Norwegian EPOC Satellite is part of the Cochrane Collaboration, an international network of more than 30,000 dedicated people from over 100 countries. The Collaboration helps health care providers, policy-makers, patients, their advocates and carers make well-informed decisions about health care, based on the best available research evidence, by preparing, updating and promoting the accessibility of systematic reviews – over 5700 so far, published online in [The Cochrane Library](#).

Support for the EPOC Satellite

The Norwegian EPOC Satellite is hosted by the Global Health Unit of the [Norwegian Knowledge Centre for the Health Services](#) and supported by the [Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation \(Norad\)](#).

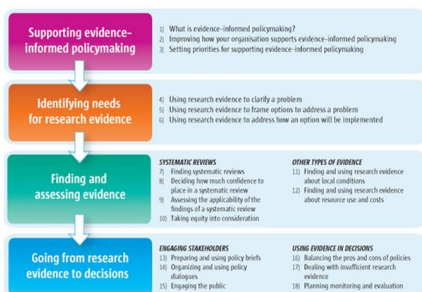
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relevant to LMIC. We also provide training stipends for review authors from LMIC. They receive personal support and instruction from the EPOC editorial team, develop capacity for undertaking systematic reviews, and prepare systematic reviews.



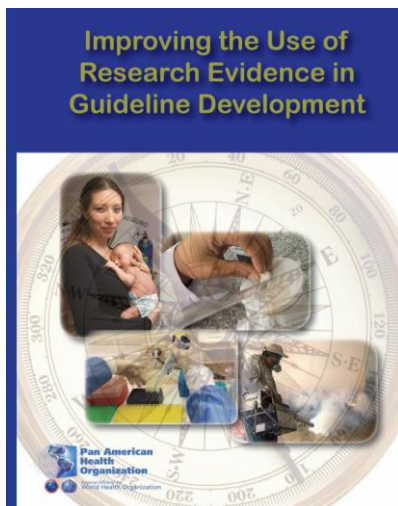
The Norwegian EPOC Satellite also helps to build the capacity of policy makers to use research evidence and researchers to support the use of research evidence through training and the development of resources to support evidence-informed health policy making, including:

SUPPORT Tools for evidence-informed health Policymaking: a series of articles written for people responsible for making decisions about health policies and programmes and for those who support them.



SURE Guides for Preparing and Using Evidence-Based Policy Briefs: intended for those responsible for preparing and supporting the use of policy briefs and ensuring that decisions about health systems are well-informed by research evidence. The guides focus specifically on these issues in the context of African health systems and the examples used are taken from policy briefs that address important problems in African countries.

Improving the use of research evidence in guideline development: a series of reviews of methods that are used in the development of guidelines prepared as background documentation for advice on ways in which WHO could improve the use of research evidence in the development of recommendations, including guidelines and policies.



Improving access to evidence

"Every day someone, somewhere searches The Cochrane Library every second, reads an abstract every two

seconds and downloads a full-text article every three seconds." There is one-click free access to The Cochrane Library in over 100 countries, including all low-income countries.

In addition to publishing systematic reviews in the Cochrane Library, the Norwegian EPOC Satellite provides rapid access to relevant health systems evidence through SUPPORT Summaries and PDQ-Evidence.

SUPPORT Summaries begin with the key messages derived from the findings of systematic reviews and our assessment, and include

- Key background information needed to understand the findings
- A summary of what the review authors searched for and found
- A detailed summary of the main findings of the review, including our assessment of the certainty of evidence for those findings
- Our assessment of the relevance of the review to LMIC

PDQ-Evidence is a database that facilitates rapid access to the best available evidence for decisions about health systems and population health. It includes systematic reviews, overviews of reviews (including evidence-based policy briefs) and primary studies included in systematic reviews.

For more information go to:
<http://epocoslo.cochrane.org/>