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Creating Collaborative and Resilient Healthcare Systems: Insights from Robin Gauld

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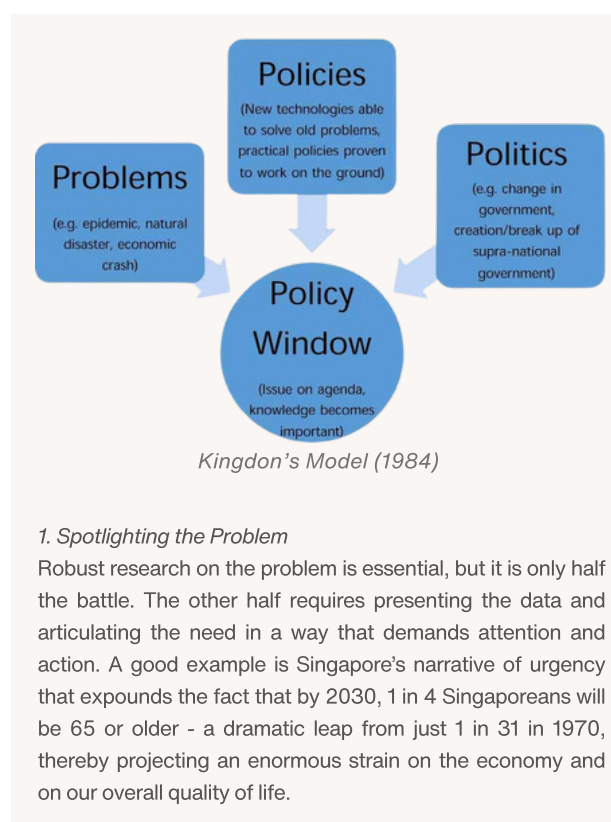26 November 2024.

Professor Robin Gauld speaking at CHI 18th Masterclass

The Centre for Healthcare Innovation (CHI)'s 18th Masterclass, "Policy to Practice: Lessons from New Zealand's population healthcare system for Singapore", was presented by Professor Robin Gauld, Co-Director of the Centre for Health Systems and Technology, Professor at Dunedin School of Medicine and University of Otago, and Founding Independent Chair of Alliance Health. An expert in health policy and implementation, Professor Gauld shared strategies for transforming healthcare systems through the lens of policy and management.

Central to his sharing was a fundamental yet pressing question: **In the face of rising costs, ageing populations, and complex health needs, how can healthcare systems evolve to deliver better care outcomes?**

Agenda Setting: The Art of Making Issues Matter

In today's rapidly ageing population, we must continually reassess our healthcare policies to prepare for the future. However, in the complex landscape of healthcare, numerous issues vie for attention, where only some make it to the policy agenda. The concept of a 'policy window' (Kingdon, 1984) becomes necessary therefore to identify and leverage on the opportune moment when three essential streams align: Problems, Policies, Politics.

Kingdon's Model (1984)

1. Spotlighting the Problem
Robust research on the problem is essential, but it is only half the battle. The other half requires presenting the data and articulating the need in a way that demands attention and action. A good example is Singapore's narrative of urgency that expounds the fact that by 2030, 1 in 4 Singaporeans will be 65 or older - a dramatic leap from just 1 in 31 in 1970, thereby projecting an enormous strain on the economy and on our overall quality of life.

2. Defining Actionable Policies

Policies for change need to come with viable solutions. Evidence-based solutions with clear models of delivery can be articulated in the implementation of policy. However, the success of these solutions will depend on their feasibility and adaptability to real-world implementation.

3. Obtaining Political Support

A final, crucial ingredient in agenda setting is political will. For policy to gain acceptance, it must receive recognition and support, evidenced by strong partnerships among a coalition of policymakers, senior leaders, middle managers, clinical leaders, and also public support.

Implementation and Evaluation: The Real Challenge

The path from paper to practice is fraught with challenges, from misaligned personnel and resource constraints to operational hurdles and resistance to change. In times like this, even the most well-intentioned policies may fail to create meaningful change.

> *Policy is 5% idea and 95% implementation.*
> *-Robin Gauld*

He therefore submitted three strategies for consideration:

1. Build Health Alliances that Foster Collaboration for Better

In view of an ageing population and increased demand for healthcare services in Singapore, health alliances can reduce fragmentation of services and ensure more efficient resource allocation. Singapore could adopt a phased approach towards building alliances, beginning with primary and secondary care. Over time, the alliance could bridge across public healthcare clusters and sectors, forming a network that "works collaboratively while maintaining independence". Such alliances would ensure that healthcare, social and community services reach the right populations at the right time.

Professor Gauld quotes James C. Collins:

> *Get the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people in the right seats".*

2. Empower Healthcare Practitioners to Lead Change through Clinical Governance & Leadership

"Everyone in this health organisation has two jobs: providing care, as well as improving the systems for providing care." Healthcare practitioners, who "know what's best for the system", play a critical role in transforming the healthcare systems, beyond their primary roles as physicians, nurses, or

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