

A White Paper,

Health Policy Brief

Submitted To,
Raihana Zannat,
Lecturer,
Department of SWE,DIU.

Submitted By,
Nourin Jahan Sonda,
ID:171-35-221,
Section :PC-B
Department of SWE,DIU.

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Abstract

Although many health care professionals are interested in health policy, relatively few have training in how to utilize their clinical experience and scientific knowledge to impact policy. Developing a policy brief is one approach that health professionals may use to draw attention to important evidence that relates to policy. This article offers guidance on how to write a policy brief by outlining 4 steps:

- (a) define the problem,
- (b) state the policy,
- (c) make your case, and
- (d) discuss the impact.

The steps and tips offer a starting point for health care professionals interested in health policy and translating research or clinical experience to impact policy.

Problem Statement

In today's practice of medicine, clinicians, researchers and health professionals are frequently interested in health policy and seek opportunities to weigh in on issues where they may be both well-informed and well-positioned to take action. However, traditional training of health professionals does not prepare us to consider or discuss our work for the purpose of impacting policy. Understanding some basic guidance for translating unique clinical experience or scientific knowledge into policy terms, is the first step toward developing a policy lens. A well-written policy brief has a clear and specific purpose and assumes the author's understanding of what it is, and what it is not, as well as clearly targeting the audience for whom it is intended. Writing a brief, while conceptually straightforward, may be challenging to initiate or compose.

Step 1: Define the Problem What is the issue or the problem? Why is it important? Why now? Who is impacted and who cares? When defining your problem, be specific to your audience and clearly frame the issue. Who has the influence to make a change that will address this problem? If the audience is expected to be policymakers (and their staff), community leaders (grassroots or grassroots), industry or nongovernmental organization executives, the problem should be defined in terms relevant to their policy intervention, respectively.

Step 2: State the Policy Identify 1–3 specific policy actions that will address the problem. In a focused policy brief, the goal is to limit the menu of potential actions to target a policy approach of interest. A more extensive policy review or proposal may be a comprehensive white paper that elucidates many related policy options. Consider a focused brief to describe one policy in depth as opposed to exploring a problem and all of the potential policy solutions.

Background

Dental health is also part of our life. Dental caries remains the most common chronic disease of childhood in the world. Fluoride has proven effectiveness in the prevention of caries and providing maximum protection against dental caries while minimizing the likelihood of enamel fluorosis. Regular fluoride exposure during the time of teeth development contributes to long lasting protection against enamel fluorosis and dental decay. Enamel is a calcium-deficient, carbonate-rich hydroxyapatite. In its stable state, there is sufficient Ca^{2+} , PO_4^{3-} , OH^- and F^- ion in the immediate vicinities of the crystals to maintain equilibrium with the surrounding fluid. During cariogenic acid attack, plaque bacteria form organic acids from carbohydrates as the acids dissociate releasing H^+ ions and lowers pH in the surroundings of the tooth. The H^+ ions protonate phosphate ions (PO_4^{3-}) present in plaque fluid to HPO_4^{2-} and particularly to H_2PO_4^- . This process also maintains neutrality and finally leads to the release of calcium from hard tooth substance. Small amounts of fluoride in solution around the tooth inhibit demineralization more effectively than incorporated fluoride and have a much greater caries-protective potential than a large proportion of fluorohydroxyapatite in enamel. The hypothesis behind this protection is the free fluoride ions in solution around the tooth or enamel crystals play a much more important role in caries prevention than fluorides incorporated in the enamel crystals. Under these conditions, fluoride ions are in part adsorbed onto the crystalline surface and are in dynamic equilibrium with the fluoride ions in solution in the immediate environs. This leads to an equilibrium or supersaturation relative to fluorohydroxyapatite and hence to reprecipitation of minerals. Additionally, the adsorption of fluoride, on the crystals offers direct protection from demineralization. The enamel crystals can be locally dissolved during an acid attack if fluoride is absent for the long time. These low fluoride concentrations are also attained after consuming foods containing fluoridated table salt, since the F^- content of saliva significantly increases for about 30 minutes after such meals. It can be inferred that fluoridated drinking water and table salt also function according to this mechanism, since the formation of CaF_2 at these low concentrations is quite unlikely. Fluoride has antimicrobial effect too. In the laboratory, it was shown that the carbohydrate metabolism of oral streptococci and lactobacilli can be inhibited by fluoride [8]. In the cell, fluoride can inhibit two enzymes: enolase and the proton releasing adenosine-triphosphatase (ATPase). The over-acidification of the cytoplasm can also inhibit the mechanism of glucose transport into the cell [9]. However, reports in recent past revealed the excessive exposure of fluoride to have certain deleterious effects on the oral health, which we have discussed here in the following text.

Solution

Briefly discuss the implications of both action and inaction; analyze estimated pros and cons of the policy action; consider intended and unintended consequences; address opposing arguments. Conclude with a restatement of how this policy specifically addresses this problem.

- Call your document a policy brief. Title the brief with a name that refers to the problem and/or the policy. Clarity is critical. 2. State your conclusion at the beginning. Be bold and clear with your key point. Then, provide analysis to support the statement. by using evidence and need to wrestle complex issues into a form that is understandable by both experts and novices who care about an issue and are positioned to move in a direction for a reason. The value of bringing practicing health professionals into the policy discussion cannot be overstated. Policy changes and reform shape every element of medicine and clinical practice today. With transformation, comes opportunity to guide and shape decision making that is grounded in evidence and clinical experience. Translating health communication for a policyfocused audience ensures that our voice is heard and we remain engaged in shaping our future.
- Use illustrative images, figures or a select story to bring data to life.
- Remain objective rather than impassioned in your analysis. Remember, this is not an opinion editorial. There is a place for that style of writing. Do not confuse the two. This is a policy statement.
- Restate your key message to start and end with impact.
- Get a good night's rest. Well-rested people not only cope better with stress, but may also have better control of their appetites. Research has shown that a lack of sleep can put our "hunger hormones" out of balance -- and possibly trigger overeating.
- Enjoy regular family meals. This allows parents to serve as good role models, can promote more nutritious eating, and sets the stage for lively conversations. Being connected to family and/or friends is a powerful aspect of a healthy life.
- Smile and laugh out loud several times a day. It keeps you grounded, and helps you cope with situations that would otherwise make you crazy. Read the comics, watch a sitcom, or tell jokes to bring out those happy feelings.
- Meditate, pray, or otherwise find solace for at least 10-20 minutes each day. Contemplation is good for your soul, helps you cope with the demands of daily life, and may even help lower your blood pressure.
- Get a pedometer and let it motivate you to walk, walk, walk. Forget about how many minutes of activity you need; just do everything you can to fit more steps into your day. No matter how you get it, physical activity can help defuse stress, burn calories, and boost self-esteem.
- Stand up straight. You'll look 5 pounds lighter if you stand tall and tighten your abdominal muscles. Whenever you walk, think "tall and tight" to get the most out of the movement.

Many authors of policy briefs share an understanding and realization that they are hard to write. This is in part because strength lies in brevity and brevity challenges inclusion of everything needed and nothing more, however interesting “more” may seem. As with all guiding frameworks,

these steps should not be misconstrued as a singular formula for a policy brief. At best, these steps may provide modest assistance to those who strive to improve policy

Conclusion

As a whole fluoride is one of the most beneficial micro nutrients for our body but in excess it can harm us in many ways. According to recommendation of World Health Organization total daily fluoride exposure would be approximately 0.6 mg/adult/day in an area in which no fluoride is added to the drinking-water and 2 mg per adult per day in a fluoridated area [5]. Therefore to get the beneficial effects of fluoride, people must be careful before consuming fluoridated water, foods, salt and using highly fluoridated tooth paste. Since young infants and children under age 2 years can swallow most of the toothpaste when brushing, parents should have to be careful. A low fluoride (less than 600 ppm) containing pediatric toothpastes can only be used for the children instead of fluoride toothpaste containing 1,000-1,500 ppm fluoride until new recommendation implemented. Government should monitor fluoride concentration in different sources of drinking water and ground water and thorough fluoride map should be available to the public. To ensure whether people need any fluoride supplements or not, Government should include the International/WHO guidelines in a circular form to prevent health problems due to deficiency or excess fluoride exposure. The guidelines must deliver an evidence-based summary of current research and facts to enlighten best practices in the use of fluoride containing materials for the safety and security of public health.

References

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