

# **PUBLIC HEALTH, POWER AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS:**

***HOW TO GET FROM 'BEING RIGHT' TO  
'BEING ACKNOWLEDGED' IN POLITICAL DECISIONS***

**YFG WORKSHOP HEALTH IN ALL POLITICS**

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## Policy, politics and public health

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*'Science can identify solutions to pressing public health problems, but only politics can turn most of those solutions into reality.'*  
Oliver, 2006

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The art, craft and science of health politics will make political choice for health the easy choice!

If public health is the field that diagnoses and strives to cure social ills, then understanding political causes and cures for health problems should be an intrinsic part of the field. In this article, we argue that there is no support for the simple and common, implicit model of politics in which scientific evidence plus political will produces healthy policies. Efforts to improve the translation of evidence into policy such as knowledge transfer work only under certain circumstances. These circumstances are frequently political, and to be understood through

## WHY?

- ▶ 'wicked' health problems cannot be captured by facts
  - ▶ health is a 'soft public value'
  - ▶ declining trust in government and experts
  
  - ▶ conventional lobbying on single health issue = powerless
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## DEFINITIONS AND DISTINCTIONS

### ➤ **Advocacy (plea)**


raising your voice in favour of an idea, cause or policy with the aim of **educating** the public and **indirectly influence** policymakers.

### ➤ **Lobbying**

is directed at **influencing** politicians and policymakers on a specific piece of regulation/ legislation

- Conventional/orthodox by representative interest groups: letter, hearing or research
- Grassroots lobbying: affecting general public opinion

## PITFALLS

- Stand alone, reactive and short term focus
  - Support from a single issue minority only
  - Huge transaction costs
  - Being received and perceived as 'activist', missionary, unwilling to compromise
  - organised failure with structural repercussions
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## BUILDING STRATEGY AROUND LOBBY: PUBLIC AFFAIRS MANAGEMENT\*

### WHAT?

- Systematic method to increase successful interest representation

### WHERE? Three arenas:

- those in power;
- stakeholders; and
- **one's own organisation** (toughest arena!!!)


*\* Sources : see end of this presentation*

## A case exercise: HPV vaccination

*'In the case of Human Papilloma Virus, vaccination was hotly debated for presumed side effects and social stigma of HPV being the result of presumed sexual risk behaviour. The HPV vaccine among specific groups of parents was even believed to promote sexual risk behaviour in young girls as they would feel protected against infections. Hot debates on social media led to decreased HPV vaccination rates because these groups would not be convinced by the technical scientific evidence refuting their assumptions. Also there was protest against the HPV vaccination to females only and the lack of responsibility for the role males play in sexual behaviour and infections.'*

(Bekker & De Goede, 2017)

What would you do?

- A. Seek support from medical associations, emancipatory or other interest pressure groups and urge politicians to make vaccination mandatory (WAVE PINK SHEET)
  - B. double communications about scientific causes and effectiveness of vaccination (WAVE YELLOW SHEET)
  - C. engage scientific and medical experts in debates with peer vloggers, adolescent tv programs and other social media fora about their concerns (WAVE GREEN SHEET)
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## TEN GOLDEN RULES OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS MNT FOR HEALTH (1)

1. It all starts with collecting intelligence among powerful stakeholders
  2. Link facts to public values at risk
  3. Link up health to powerful non-health interest groups, aim for a sustainable partnership
  4. Formulate a positive and shared ambition
  5. Have a powerful opinion leader tell your story and make the case
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## TEN GOLDEN RULES (2)

6. Careful timing of actual lobbying

7. Visualise your support levels on social media

8. Support politicians:

- Provide clear cut solutions
- allow them to take credit or avoid blame

9. Develop long term consistent agenda and perseverance

10. Safeguard your reputation, 'Built up in years, lost in days'

# Sources

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FINALLY...

- ▶ Follow up workshop at EPH conference 1 November, Stockholm, <https://ephconference.eu/>
- ▶ Organised together with **EUPHAnxt** young professionals
- ▶ Check if there is enough support for a skills-building Preconference event 2018
- ▶ Join us!

[www.eupha.org](http://www.eupha.org)

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