Moving Research Into Practice – Making Change

Philip Davies PhD

Outline

- Evidence-Based Policy

- Factors other than evidence

- Establish a theory of change

- Multiple levels of potential change/influence

- Identifying potential mechanisms of change

- Barriers to moving research into practice

- Overcoming the the barriers to moving research into practice

Evidence-Based Policy and Practice

- Helping people make better decisions and achieve better outcomes, by using the best available evidence from research and other sources, and

- *Integrating* research with decision makers' knowledge, skills, experience, expertise and judgement

Values and
Decision Making
Context

Pragmatics &
Contingencies

Experience
&
Expertise

Lobbyists &
Pressure
Groups

Evidence

Judgement
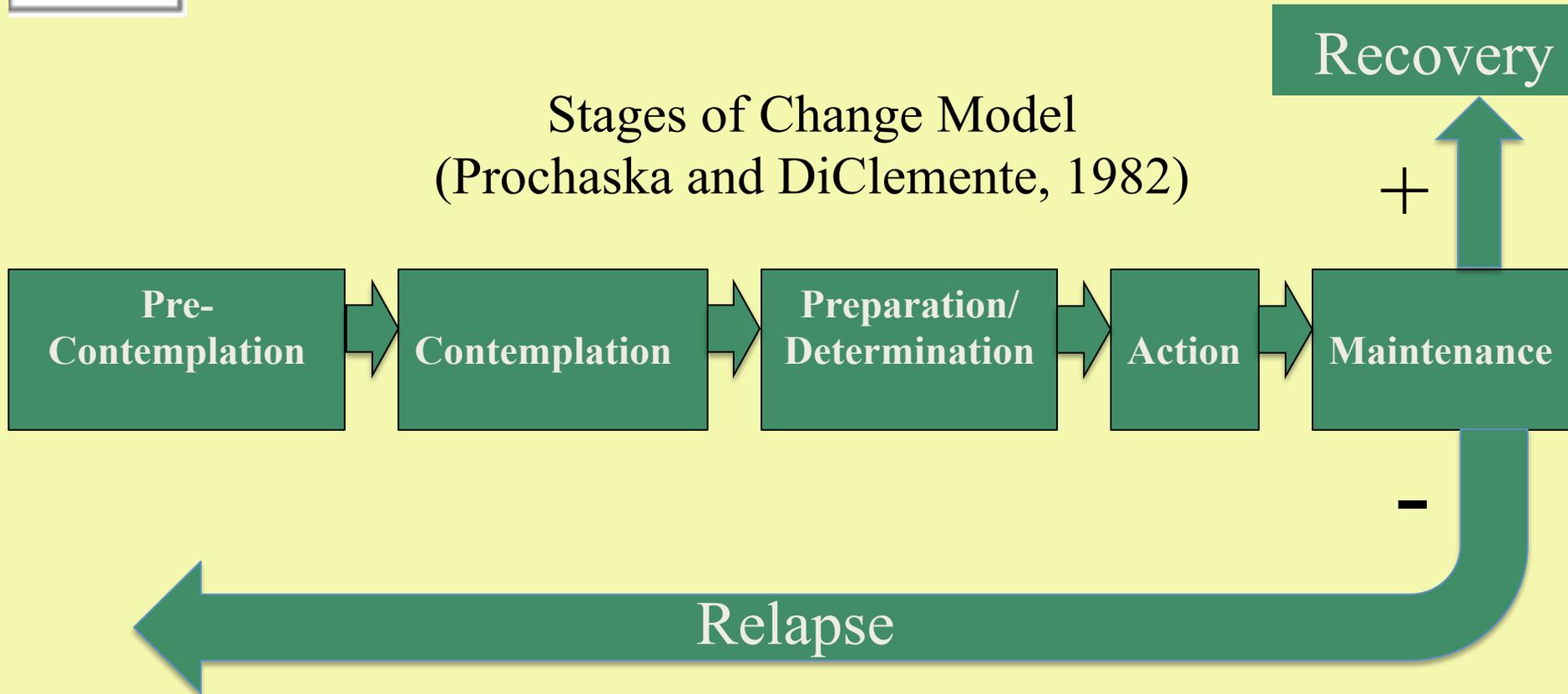
Bureaucratic
Contexts

Resources

Evaluation: Theory of Change/Logic Model

- How is a policy/programme supposed to work?

- What activities, mechanisms, people have to be in place?

- And in what sequence – what is the causal chain?

- What resources are required – and are available?

- What data are required – and are available?

- Is the policy/programme feasible/achievable?

Oxford Evidentia
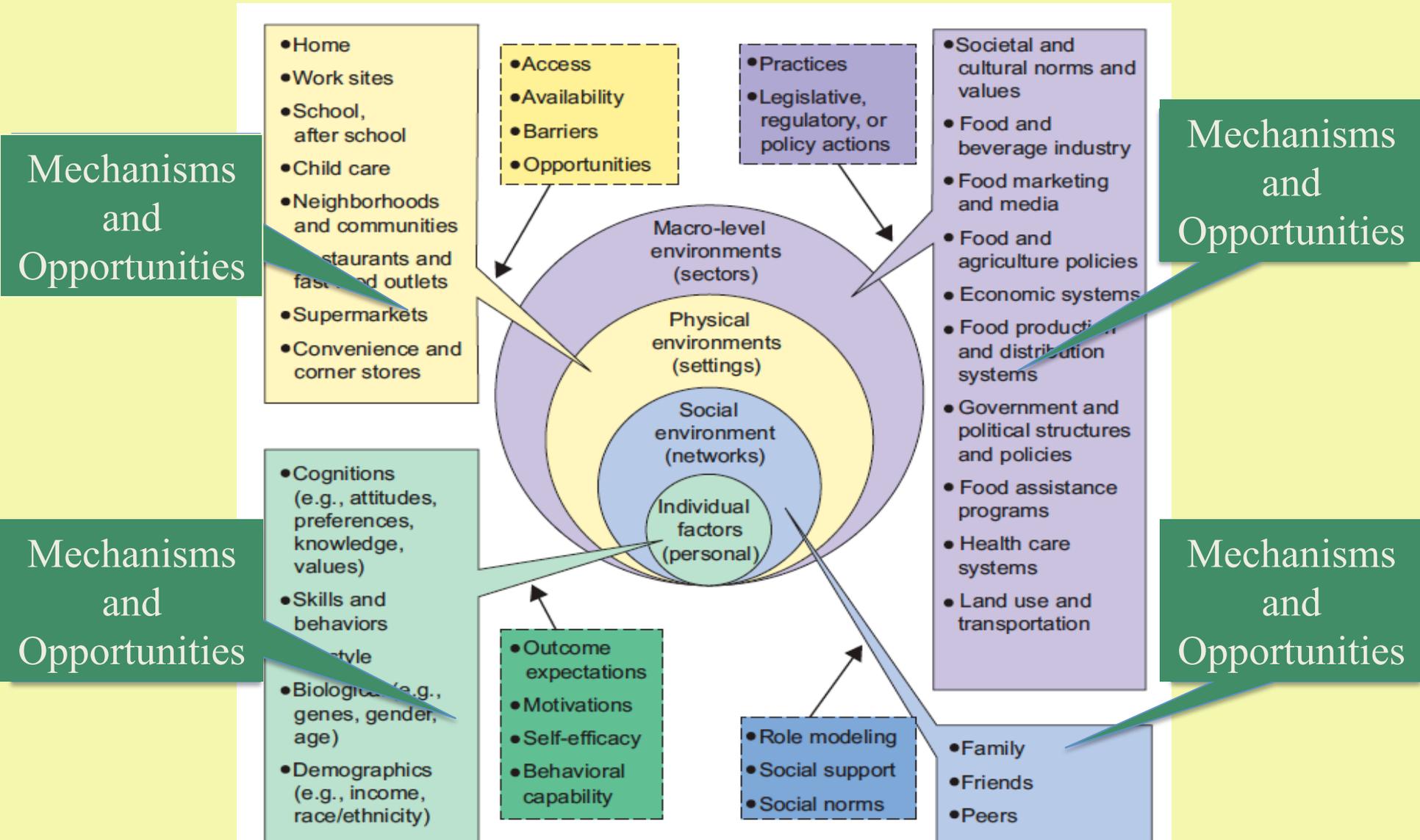
Stages of Change Model
(Prochaska and DiClemente, 1982)

Recovery

+

| Pre-Contemplation | → | Contemplation | → | Preparation/Determination | → | Action | → | Maintenance |

−

Relapse

Oxford Evidentia

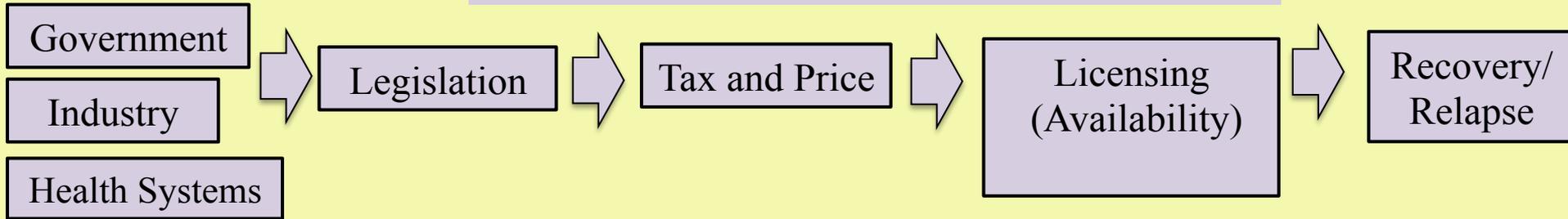# Policy, Practice and Research

- "Decision making is a process, not an event"

- Seeing policy making as a rational process "fails to do justice to the ethereal nature of that *diffuse, haphazard, and somewhat volatile process* called decision making."

- "The unit of research transfer should rarely be the single study but should, rather, be the summary and synthesis of knowledge *across the entire spectrum of stages in the process*."

* Lomas, J., 2000, *Canadian Journal of Policy Research*, Spring, 140-144.

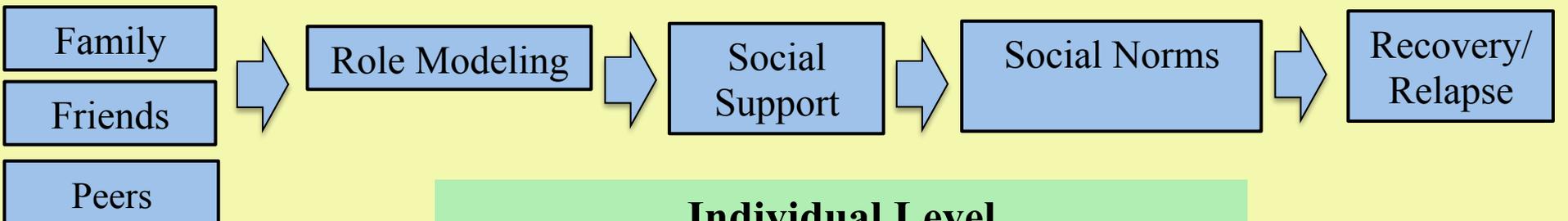# The Multiple Levels of Influence and Change
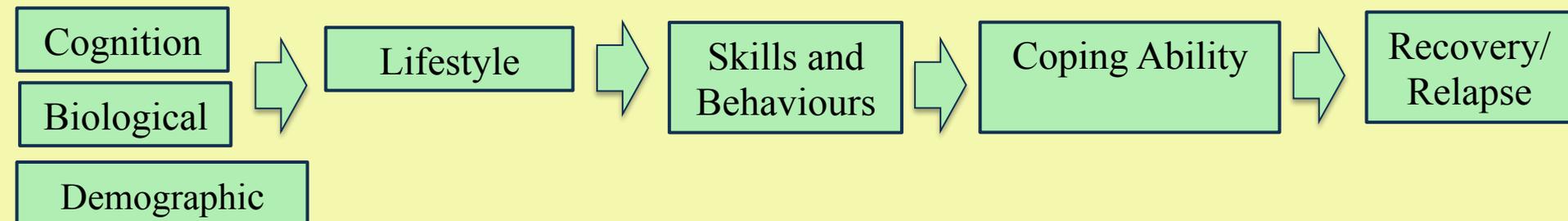
Macro Level Environment (Policy)

Government				
Industry	→ Legislation	→ Tax and Price	→ Licensing (Availability)	→ Recovery/ Relapse
Health Systems				

Physical Environment

Home				
Bars/Pubs	→ Access	→ Availability	→ Opportunities	→ Recovery/ Relapse
Supermarkets				

Social Environment

Family				
Friends	→ Role Modeling	→ Social Support	→ Social Norms	→ Recovery/ Relapse
Peers				

Individual Level

Cognition				
Biological	→ Lifestyle	→ Skills and Behaviours	→ Coping Ability	→ Recovery/ Relapse
Demographic				

Oxford Evidentia

Types of Research Use

Instrumental Use
Involves acting on research results in specific, direct ways.

Conceptual Use
Involves using research results for general enlightenment; results influence actions, but in less specific, more indirect ways than in instrumental use

Symbolic Use
Involves using research results to legitimate and sustain pre-determined positions.

Understanding How Research Gets Used
Indirection and Percolation*

"Ideas from research are picked up in diverse ways and **percolate** through to office holders in many offices that deal with the issues."

*Weiss, C., Policy research in the context of diffuse decision making, *Journal of Higher Education*, **53**, 6, 619-639.

Oxford Evidentia

How Research Gets Used:
Interpersonal Networks and Interaction*

Clinicians rarely accessed and used explicit evidence from research or other sources directly, but relied on "mindlines"—collectively reinforced, internalised, tacit guidelines. These were informed by brief reading but mainly by their own and their colleagues' experience, their **interactions with each other** and with **opinion leaders, patients, and pharmaceutical representatives**, and other sources of largely tacit knowledge.

* Gabbay and le May, 2004, *British Medical Journal*, **329**, 1013.

How Research Gets Used:
Interpersonal Networks and Interaction*

"Knowledge depends for its circulation *on interpersonal networks,* and will only diffuse if these social features are taken into account and barriers overcome."

* Greenhalgh T, et al, 2004 *Milbank Quarterly, 82, 581-629.*

The Passive Diffusion Model

Assumes:

- that publishing research = use of research
- that policy makers actively seek out research evidence
- that policy makers select and appraise evidence appropriately
- that policy makers make research-driven, probabilistic decisions

These assumptions are *not substantiated* by evidence from studies of research utilization

Source: J. Lomas, 1993

Oxford Evidentia

The Active Dissemination Model

An improvement on the passive diffusion model

Recognises that:

- The stock and flow of research evidence requires synthesis
- Research evidence needs to be made accessible
- Research evidence needs 'retailers'/'entrepreneurs'
- Research retailers must have credibility and authority
- Research evidence requires dissemination via guidelines

However, receiving and absorbing research ≠ research use

Source: J. Lomas, 1993

Coordinated-Implementation Model

- Involves careful evaluation *of what drives the potential users' behaviour*

- Recognises that even synthesized and accessible information is not the only source of evidence/guidance

- Competition from other sources of information requires the synthesis of evidence to be *actively managed*.

- Recognises the *role of informal networks* and day-to-day contacts with colleagues and influential sources

- Research evidence must *be carefully embedded* in multiple routes of influence

Source: J. Lomas, 1993

Routes to Influence

Multiple stakeholders/partners:

- Politicians (legislative, not just executive)

- Policymakers and special advisers

- Front line delivery staff

- Citizens

- Special interest groups

- Civil society organisations

- Lobbyist and pressure groups

- Judiciary

Routes of Influence

Multiple media:

- Print media (summaries)

- Electronic media (summaries)

- Interpersonal relationships

- Social media and networking

- Guidelines/Best Practice summaries

- Co-ordinating agents/agencies

Source: J. Lomas, 1993

Barriers to the Use of Evidence

- Policymakers' lack of familiarity with the research process

- Researchers' lack of familiarity with the policy process

- Trust (lack of trust) of policymakers in researchers (vice versa)

- Timeliness and availability of evidence

- Physical access to evidence

- Cognitive access to evidence (i.e. lack of understanding)

- Lack of clarity in the presentation of evidence

Overcoming Barriers to the Use of Evidence

- Interactions between researchers and policymakers increases the prospects for research use by policymakers (Lavis et al, 2005).

- Early and ongoing involvement of relevant decision makers increase research utilisation (Lomas, 2000)

- Identify and use interpersonal networks and interactions

- Identify willing and able knowledge brokers

- Separate strategic from operational demands for evidence

- Get policy makers to own the evidence – not just the policy

Overcoming Barriers to the Use of Evidence

- Incentives to use high quality evidence

- Strategic planning of policy/practice and research

- Finding the 'KT Moment'

- Making research evidence accessible

- Using knowledge brokers

Strategic Planning of Policy/Practice and Research

| Alberta/ Canada 2015 | Alberta/ Canada 2020 | Alberta/ Canada 2025 | Alberta/ Canada 2050 |

What will the key policy and practice issues be in Alberta/Canada in these time periods?

What research knowledge will be needed in these time periods?

Finding the 'KT Moment'

- Working with the policy timetable - e.g.
  - ➢ Legislative timetable
  - ➢ Impact Assessments
  - ➢ Government's Spending Review/Allocation Process
  - ➢ International agreements and obligations
- Identifying opportunities for pilots/policy trials
- Using research to inform the implementation and delivery of policy and public services

Making Research Evidence Accessible

- Physical access to research evidence
- Cognitive access to research evidence (research literacy)
- Overcoming organisational restraints on external evidence
- Building research knowledge infrastructures (RKIs)
- Building trust civil servants and reseachers
- Filling communication gaps between researchers and civil servants
- Synchronising time horizons

Source. Ouimet M., et al, 2009

Oxford Evidentia

What Users Want From Research Presentations

- 'Graded entry' to presentations of research (1:3:25)
- Well written summaries, with a clear message
- Indications of relevance for decision making
- But not specific recommendations ("give me a steer")
- Contextual factors that affect local applicability
- Information about the benefits, harms/risks and costs of interventions
- Messages that are simple and unclouded by jargon
- Aligned to decision making timescales

Sources: Petticrew et al, 2004; Lavis et al, 2005; Dobbins et al, 2007; Rosenbaum, 2010

Summary

- Good decision making requires good evidence

- Aligned with judgement and factors other than evidence

- Research is not the only source of evidence

- Evidence requires active management and brokering

- Evidence must be clear and accessible

- Look for the 'KT Moment' – strategically and operationally

- Decision makers need incentives/rewards to use evidence

- These are organizational and individual challenges

Oxford Evidentia

Contact

Philip Davies PhD
Oxford Evidentia Limited

Tel: +44 (0)1869 347284
Mobile: +44 (0)7927 186074
Email: pdavies@oxev.co.uk
www.oxfordevidentia.co.uk