Injury

Public Health Law Research
Scott Burris, Temple University Beasley School of Law
INJURY SCIENCE DAY
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA
“Extensive research shows the dangers of distracted driving ....”
An Oklahoma legislator said “he and his colleagues needed more evidence of the dangers before they considered restricting the freedom to talk while driving.”
“’To me, the death of freedom is far worse than the risk of talking on the phone while driving,’ said a state representative in Salt Lake City...”
Driven to Distraction

Research is necessary but not sufficient
What is necessary from the scientific perspective ≠ what is necessary from the policy standpoint.
Public Health Law Research Program (PHLR)

Five-year, $17 million RWJF national program

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY®
Beasley School of Law
PHLR Program Activities

3 Rounds of Research Funding

Conduct Research

Dissemination of Evidence

Strengthen Research Methods

June 2009  2010  2011  2012  2013  2014
Defining PHLR

“Scientific study of the relation of law and legal practices to population health.”
“Scientific study of the relation of law and legal practices to population health.”

Deploys recognized methodologies
Theoretical framework
Collect and analyze data
“Scientific study of the relation of law and legal practices to population health.”

Focus on population outcomes, not individual outcomes
Defining PHLR

“Scientific study of the relation of law and legal practices to population health.”

- Implementation practices
- Regulatory techniques
- How people think & respond to law
Logic model of PHLR

Inputs

- Laws
  - Interventional
  - Infrastructural
  - Accidental

Mediators

- Changes in behavior
- Changes in environments

Outcomes

- Population health

Law-making

Legal Practices
Some PHLR directly tests law’s impact on health

Inputs
Graduated drivers license laws

Mediators

Outcomes
Reduction in fatal crashes, injury crashes, all crashes

E.g., Robert D. Foss et al., Initial Effects of Graduated Driver Licensing on 16-Year-Old Driver Crashes in North Carolina, 286 JAMA 1588, 1588 (2001).
Or a well-established mediator of health outcomes

Inputs | Mediators | Outcomes

Seat belt laws | Seat belt use

E.g., Effectiveness of primary and secondary enforced seat belt laws
Frederick P. Rivara, et al American Journal of Preventive Medicine
January 1999 (Vol. 16, Issue 1, Pages 30-39)
Some PHLR starts with implementation

E.g., NPO-funded RCT of Philadelphia street beat experiment conducted by Temple by criminologists Gerry Ratcliffe, Liz Goff and Jennifer Wood
Some PHLR investigates how law is developed.

Inputs | Mediators | Outcomes

- Law

Drafting and adoption of model laws

Or how it influences behavior

Inputs   Mediators   Outcomes

Law → Behavior

PHLR Approach

Identify Public Health Risk
Disproportionate rate of teen crashes → First GDL laws → Research Legal Intervention → Wider adoption & variation

Continuous Improvement
Health → Evidence

Replicate Legal Intervention
Various restrictions

Refine Legal Intervention
Various restrictions

Research Legal Intervention

GDL laws everywhere
Making the case for laws that improve health

Laws influence health and behavior
Research helps define/understand the issue
Research results can help convince stakeholders to act
Support PHLR

- Form interdisciplinary research-practice collaborations
- Use PHLR methods & guides
- Read and share PHLR Framework Paper and Evidence Briefs
- Submit grant application for current Call for Proposals