
Editorial: Using evidence to address societal challenges

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COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the need of reliable and up-to-date evidence for decision-making. Built on that experience, in 2021 [The Global Commission on Evidence to Address Societal Challenges](#) was formed. The commission grew out of a global network of 55 partners—the COVID-19 Evidence Network to support Decision-making (COVID-END). In January 2022 the commission released a report with 24 recommendations and three implementation priorities ([Global Commission, 2022](#)). The independent panel of commissioners brought diverse points of view to creating that report which speaks to the many different types of people who make or can influence decisions about whether and how evidence is used to address societal challenges. Independent commissioners brought complementary perspectives, ranging across most types of societal challenges (and sustainable development goals), all types of decision-makers (government policymakers, organizational leaders, professionals and citizens) and all major forms of evidence.

The three formulated implementation priorities are,

- (1) formalizing and strengthening domestic evidence support systems;
- (2) enhancing and leveraging the global evidence architecture;
- (3) putting evidence at the center of everyday life.

The report is available in seven languages and matches specific recommendations to multiple stakeholders who are best positioned to make the changes necessary to ensure that evidence is consistently used: multilateral organizations; national and sub-national government policymakers; organizational leaders, professionals and citizens; evidence intermediaries and evidence producers. Update 2023 (released in January 2023) describes the progress toward improving the use of evidence and how all stakeholders are moving from recommendations into action ([Global Commission, 2023](#)).

Among evidence producers are scientific journals, whose responsibilities are to improve the ways in which they support the use of best evidence. Specific recommendations for the journals are ([Global Commission, 2022](#)):

- (1) to mandate the use of reporting guidance and critical-appraisal checklists by reviewers;
- (2) to encourage placement of single studies in the context of evidence syntheses;
- (3) to support sharing of anonymized study data;
- (4) to commit to publishing non-positive research reports and replication studies;
- (5) to avoid “spin” and act quickly when apprised of scientific misconduct;
- (6) to find a timely way to publish updates to living evidence products;
- (7) to ensure that publication delays never hinder the public sharing of evidence that is urgently needed for decision-making (and reciprocally that public sharing does not preclude later publication in a journal).

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or private healthcare systems or organizations. Our editorial team, our peer-reviewers and our publisher are exploring the ways we can support the use of the best evidence by our international readership, and thus have already implemented some of the above recommendations:

- (1) in our editorials we encourage potential authors to register protocols of their planned research synthesis with appropriate databases; emphasize the importance of using reporting guidelines, and explain the journal's pre-print policy;
- (2) authors can now share all anonymized study data as supplementary files: they can choose to host these supplementary files alongside their article on Insight, Emerald's content hosting platform, or on their institutional or personal repository;
- (3) *IJHG* formed a group of methodology peer-reviewers (with an experience in systematic reviews), and they are invited as referees for all evidence synthesis submissions (systematic, scoping, mapping, rapid evidence reviews and similar).
- (4) during the submission of manuscripts authors are advised to include a plain language summary in order to reach a wider audience by summarizing their work in terms that are accessible to people outside of a specific scientific circle.

By publishing research from different countries and contexts, *IJHG* supports the need of decision-makers to combine “domestic evidence (what has been learned in our country) and global evidence (what has been learned from around the world, including how it varies by groups and contexts)” (Global Commission, 2023). While we welcome all manuscripts that fit within this journal's focus and scope, we particularly want to encourage submissions of different types of evidence synthesis research (reviews with systematic approach), which could accelerate sharing of evidence that is urgently needed for decision-making at different levels of health systems.

Therefore, we turn to our future authors and encourage them to aim at producing outcome-oriented evidence when planning and presenting their research. This could be achieved by implementing the following recommendations of the Global Commission: filling gaps and adhering to standards for their specific forms of evidence; responding, referring or working with others – by combining evidence in the many forms, evidence from across the health, natural and social sciences and evidence from across sectors; learning from and adopting innovations from other sectors; making evidence understandable and considering information needs of decision-makers.

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Further reading

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