NISH: Strengthening Scientific Capacity of NITAGS in Africa

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N’Djamena, Chad
Presentation goals

01 The NISH project and the background to the project

02 Rationale for the scientific support provided to NITAGs by the NISH

03 A snapshot of the Evidence to Recommendation (EtR) process that NITAGs utilize
NISH is Hosted by VACFA, Based at UCT

Vaccines for Africa Initiative (VACFA)

- Academic unit
- University of Cape Town (UCT), South Africa
- School of Public Health (SPH)
- Greg Hussey: Former Chair of the South African NITAG (NAGI)
- Rudzani Muloiwa: A core member of NAGI
- Benjamin Kagina: SIVAC’s capacity development activities of NITAGs in Africa and East Asia
Rationale for establishing the NISH project
Rationale for establishing the NISH project

- A 2-day stakeholder workshop (Nov 2018) initiated by WHO and Wellcome identified the following areas that NITAGs will need support for in the future:
  - provision of financial resources
  - experiences sharing
  - capacity development
  - improved access to NITAG tools and research evidence
Rationale for establishing the NISH project

To address some of the challenges, we hypothesized that:

✓ An academic-based approach (NISH) is a feasible support mechanism for NITAGs in Africa

✓ The NISH would give scientific support to NITAGs to inform immunization practices and policies

✓ The NISH project will accelerate growth & maturity of NITAGs to advance immunization programs in Africa
Key findings from the scoping review

✓ NITAGs support the idea of setting up NISH

59 out of the 60 responses support the idea of establishing NISH
An initiative for Africa, by Africans

NISH is a scientific support hub for National Immunisation Technical Advisory Groups (NITAGs) on the African continent. We assist with training, scientific support and research.

MORE

https://health.uct.ac.za/nish
Our work

Supporting NITAGs in Africa

NISH, the National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups (NITAGs) Support Hub, actively supports the work of NITAGs in the WHO Africa Region. NITAGs benefit from an extensive portfolio of offerings and pool of experts to access information and tools from vaccinology and related disciplines to refine their recommendations for national immunisation policies and programmes.

Training
Scientific support
Research

Training
Courses on vaccinology and EIDM, practical skills and more

Scientific support
Expertise in health systems, economics, modelling, design thinking, evidence and more

Research
Assets and resources relevant to African contexts, skills development and more

Helpdesk
Request scientific support via our online form

https://health.uct.ac.za/nish
NISH operational & governance model

Users
- NITAGs

Access channels
- WHO
- Help desk
- NISH website

Core services
- EIDM training & support
- Vaccinology training
- Health economics support
- Mathematical modelling support
- Health systems support
- Design thinking
- Research

NISH Staff

Training & e-learning unit, Scientific unit & Help desk
Evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) entails:

- **Identifying**
- **Appraising**
- **Mobilizing**

the best available evidence for safe and effective vaccines and immunization policies

In the context of immunization and vaccines policies, EIDM can improve:

- Effectiveness
- Efficiency & optimization of the program
- Equity
- Transparency & accountability
- Reduced research waste

Why provide scientific support to NITAGs?
Why provide scientific support to NITAGs?

- Others routinely used in certain settings: Influenza, varicella, Hep A etc
- New & future vaccines: Malaria, Ebola, RSV, TB, HIV etc
Why provide scientific support to NITAGs?

No. of vaccines in NIP

- Africa
- USA

Vaccine gap

Acknowledgement: Slide from Prof. Gregory Hussey
Why provide scientific support to NITAGs?

The life course approach

Life stages

- Preconception
- Infancy and early years (0 to 5)
- Childhood and adolescence (5 to 24)
- Working age and adults (16 to 64)
- Older people
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03 A snapshot of the Evidence to Recommendation (EtR) process that NITAGs utilize
Evidence to Recommendation (EtR) Steps

Step 1: THE QUESTION
- Formulate policy question
- Focus policy question (PICO)

Step 2: THE CRITERIA
- Specify evidence to be collected
- Prioritize outcomes

Step 3: THE EVIDENCE
- Gather, analyze evidence
- Assess quality
- Synthesize evidence
- Prepare documents

Step 4: THE RECOMMENDATION
- Discuss draft recommendation
- Vote on recommendation
## Evidence to Recommendation (EtR) Steps

The criteria: 7 domains to address the question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain 1</th>
<th>Domain 5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Problem</td>
<td>Resource use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain 2</td>
<td>Domain 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits and harms of the intervention</td>
<td>Equity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domain 3</td>
<td>Domain 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Values and preferences of the target population</td>
<td>Feasibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domain 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceptability to stakeholders</td>
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</table>
# EtR Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOMAIN</th>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>JUDGEMENTS</th>
<th>EVIDENCE</th>
<th>ADDITIONAL INFORMATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Problem</td>
<td>Is the problem of public health importance?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Benefits &amp; harms of the</td>
<td>Are desirable anticipated effects large? Are undesirable anticipated</td>
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<tr>
<td>options</td>
<td>effects small? Balance between benefits and harms. What is the quality</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of evidence for critical outcomes?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Values &amp; preferences</td>
<td>Does the target population feel the desirable effects are large</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>relative to the undesirable effects?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Resource use</td>
<td>Are the resources required small? What is the cost-effectiveness?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Equity</td>
<td>What would be the impact on health inequities?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Acceptability</td>
<td>Which option is acceptable to key stakeholders? To the target population?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Feasibility</td>
<td>Is the intervention feasible to implement?</td>
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</table>

| Balance of consequences       |                                                                          |            |          |                        |
| Type of recommendation        |                                                                          |            |          |                        |
| Recommendation (text)         |                                                                          |            |          |                        |
| Implementation considerations |                                                                          |            |          |                        |
| Monitoring and evaluation     |                                                                          |            |          |                        |
| Research priorities           |                                                                          |            |          |                        |
EtR Online training for NITAGs

Curriculum Modules

1. Preparing for the Evidence to Recommendation Process
2. Formulating and Focusing the Policy Question
3A. Defining Generic Criteria for Decision Making
3B. Defining PICO-Specific Criteria for Decision Making
4. Prioritizing Criteria for Decision Making
5. Gathering Evidence: Vaccine Efficacy, Safety, & Global Policy
6. Gathering Evidence: General & Local Data
7. Synthesizing Evidence for Decision Making
Opportunities for improvements

1) Pivoting on existing support & networks can expand the reach of NITAG support with a potential to minimize logistics/costs

2) Partnerships and collaborations with NITAG stakeholders is critical

3) Aligning the support with the needs of the NITAGs will improve the translation of knowledge gained to action

4) Post support follow ups
Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the NISH project team & Management Board
Thank you