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Reflections Using Implementation Research to Guide PSBI Programming in Kenya and Elsewhere

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What is implementation research? How do we know we are really “using” implementation research?

- Implementation research involves the creation and application of knowledge to improve the implementation of health policies, programs, and practices (Theobald S Lancet 2018 392:2214)
 - Defining characteristics: context-specific, relevant/agenda-setting purpose; methods fit for purpose; demand-driven; multi-stakeholder/multi-disciplinary, real-world; real time; focuses on processes & outcomes
 - Still gets confused with other types of enhanced documentation, problem solving and learning activities
 - “Implementation research” and “implementation science” – use of scientific methods to gather & analyze data to answer questions; term “research” can be controversial in some setting & has practical consequences

Implementation Research Outcomes, Methods (1)

- Reasonable IR outcomes: acceptability, adoption, appropriateness, feasibility, fidelity, implementation cost, penetration, sustainability (Proctor E Adm Policy Ment Health 2011 38:65)
 - Many addressed in Kenya but what about impact? (see theory of change)
 - Understanding context for change over time and in different settings within Kenya (counties, facility types)

Implementation Research Outcomes, Methods (2)

- Generalizability, ability to learn
 - Theory of change, evolving nature of learning
 - Structures in place to facilitate learning & “research” mindset – stakeholder groups/local COP, DHIS2, monitoring system
 - Spread & use beyond IR study counties (PSBI policy vs practice)
- Trade-offs between pursuit of rigorous methods and timeliness utility of research
 - Specific diagnoses & treatments vs. syndromic care/PSBI in monitoring systems
 - Balancing various stakeholder interests and incentives (especially non-researchers); role in developing IR capacity and demand