

# T17aP23 / Unintended Consequences of Policies

**Topic :** T17a / Sectorial Policy - Health

**Chair :** Helen Jordan (Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, The University of Melbourne)

## GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

The objective of this panel is to promote the importance of policy evaluation, monitoring and research that explores unintended consequences of policies, both positive and negative, and the causal mechanisms that underpin their development and effects. Unintended consequences of health policies can come in many forms, and like the title of Sergio Leone's Spaghetti Western – can consist of 'the good, the bad and the ugly'. The 'good' unintended consequences can be a bonus to any desirable policy outcome, while the 'bad' consequences could, depending on their seriousness, override any potential or existing policy benefits. Knowing to what extent policies contribute to unintended consequences and the context and mechanism supporting these events, can inform the development of related and unrelated policies for which similar behavioral or system drivers are at play. Merton, in his 1936 publication on the unanticipated consequences of purposive social action argued the need for greater systematic analysis of the process of unintended consequences (Merton 1936). Sherrill (1984) argued for more to be done by evaluators in uncovering the unintended outcomes of government actions. Research by Ringold (2002) highlighted the need to increase attention to the study of unintended consequences of policies. Not much has changed despite these calls. Most of evaluative efforts of policies and programs still focus on intended policy outcomes. This panel hopes to encourage a greater focus on unintended outcomes - types, mechanisms and methods used to identify and explore them. In addition, the panel aims to examine how and under what conditions, the lessons learned from these evaluations feedback into policies, transforming the policy cycle into a recursive learning cycle and thereby contributing to our collective problem-solving capacities.

Merton RK. 1936. The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action. *Am Sociol Rev* 1: 894-904.

Ringold DJ. 2002. Boomerang Effect: In Response to Public Health Interventions: Some Unintended Consequences in the Alcoholic Beverage Market. *Journal of Consumer Policy* 25: 27-63.

Sherrill S. 1984. Identifying and measuring unintended outcomes. *Eval Program Plann* 7: 27-34.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

Outcome related policy evaluations typically determine the degree to which a policy achieves one or a set of intended outcomes. However, less 'evaluative or research' effort goes into determining the mechanism of action for these intended outcomes; lesser effort on the degree to which and why a policy leads to unintended outcomes. This panel requests papers that will fill this gap. Papers that explore unintended consequences of policies, the underpinning mechanisms, and/or methods for forecasting, monitoring and evaluating these consequences (including systems thinking approaches) are invited to participate in this session. We also welcome papers that examine the relations between policy evaluation / monitoring and policy learning. Unintended consequences can be positive or negative, individual or population based, intersectoral, organisational, or multi-state. Studies that focus on unintended consequences to health and wellbeing, directly or indirectly via any one or more of the social determinants of health, or health system building blocks are particularly relevant.

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## Session 1 Unintended Consequences of Health Policies

Thursday, June 29th 13:30 to 15:30 (Block B 3 - 6 )

### Discussants

Helen Jordan (Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, The University of Melbourne)

### **Menu Labels, for Better, AND Worse? Exploring Socio-Economic and Racial-Ethnic Disparities in Menu Label Use in a National Sample**

Wenhui Feng (Tufts University)

Ashley Fox (Rockefeller College, University at Albany, State University of New York, State University of New York)

### **Exploring unintended consequences of policy initiatives in mental health: the example of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in England**

David Foreman (King's College London, University of London)

### **Health and Mental Health Effects of Local Immigration Enforcement Policies on Latino Immigrants in the US**

Julia Shu-Huah Wang (University of Hong Kong)

Neeraj Kaushal (Columbia University )

### **The effect of cost sharing on health utilization and financial risk protection**

Haoran Peng (Sun Yat-sen University)

Minhui Xiao (College of Public Management, Guangdong University of Finance and Economics)

### **Unintended higher local suicide rate after suicide prevention law enactment in Korea**

Iljoo Park (Korea University)

### **Consequences of Population Control Policies in Maharashtra (India), 1960-2010**

Daksha Parmar (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai)