



Evidence based policing – what can we learn from the British experience?

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Outline for today

- The story of medicine: anecdote, authority, evidence
- From evidence-based medicine to evidence-based policing
- Developments in Britain: EMMIE and the What Works Centre for Crime Reduction
- Requirements for and challenges in evidence-based policing



To avoid any confusion

| Study name | Outcome | Statistics for each study | | | Std diff in means and 95% CI |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|---------|------------------------------|
| | | Std diff in means | Standard error | p-Value | |
| KC Gun | Gun crimes | 0.866 | 0.275 | 0.002 | |
| Phila Drug Corners | Combined | 0.855 | 0.258 | 0.001 | |
| Buenos Aires Police | Motor vehicle theft incidents | 0.617 | 0.169 | 0.000 | |
| JC Disp. Prost. | Prostitution events | 0.525 | 0.149 | 0.000 | |
| JC Disp. Drug | Drug events | 0.441 | 0.131 | 0.001 | |
| Minn. RECAP Resid. | Total calls | 0.369 | 0.132 | 0.005 | |
| Boston SST | Total violent incidents | 0.341 | 0.020 | 0.000 | |
| Oakland Beath Health | Drug calls | 0.279 | 0.056 | 0.000 | |
| JC DMAP | Combined | 0.147 | 0.270 | 0.585 | |
| Lowell POP | Total calls | 0.145 | 0.034 | 0.000 | |
| JC POP | Combined | 0.143 | 0.043 | 0.001 | |
| Phila. Foot Patrol | Violent incidents | 0.143 | 0.021 | 0.000 | |
| Pittsburgh Bar Raids | Drug calls | 0.125 | 0.038 | 0.001 | |
| NYCTNT 67 | Combined | 0.087 | 0.077 | 0.257 | |
| Minn. Patrol | Total calls | 0.061 | 0.015 | 0.000 | |
| KCCrack | Total calls | 0.051 | 0.039 | 0.188 | |
| Minn. RECAP Comm. | Total calls | 0.015 | 0.137 | 0.913 | |
| Jacksonville POP | Combined | -0.005 | 0.092 | 0.969 | |
| NYC TNT 70 | Combined | -0.027 | 0.080 | 0.739 | |
| Jacksonville Patrol | Combined | -0.055 | 0.096 | 0.568 | |
| | | 0.184 | 0.035 | 0.000 | |

Meta-Analysis Random Effects Model. Q = 184.021, df = 19, p<0.000.

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Bloodletting



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First, do no harm

- The long road from *eminence-based medicine* to *evidence-based medicine*
- “Evidence based medicine is the conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients...**integrating individual clinical expertise with the best available external clinical evidence from systematic research**”.
Sackett et al. (1996)

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Evidence-based policing

Ideas in American Policing



Evidence-Based Policing

By Lawrence W. Sherman

“Police practices should be based on scientific evidence about **what works best**”

Lawrence Sherman, 1998

Abstract

The core principle of “evidence-based medicine” holds that medical decisions should be based on the best available scientific evidence. This paper argues that the same principle should guide police practices. The paper reviews the current state of police practices and identifies areas where evidence-based practices could be implemented. The paper also discusses the challenges of implementing evidence-based practices in the police context.

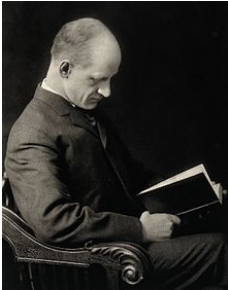

Lawrence W. Sherman is professor and chair of the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Maryland at College Park. He was the Philip H. Knight Professor of Criminology from 2010 to 2018.

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Do we need evidence-based policing?


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Cambridge-Somerville Youth study

| | |
|--|--|
|  |  |
| Richard Clarke Cabot Physician 1838-1939 | Joan McCord Social Scientist 1930-2004 |

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Criminological bloodletting?



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Chasing ghosts?

| | <i>Two-week task</i> | <i>One-year task</i> |
|-----------|----------------------|----------------------|
| All Areas | 20% (38) | 59% (152) |
| Area 1 | 12% (8) | 64% (54) |
| Area 2 | 15% (9) | 52% (41) |
| Area 3 | 33% (21) | 61% (57) |

McLaughlin, L. M., Johnson, S. D., Bowers, K. J., Birks, D. J., & Pease, K. (2007). Police perceptions of the long- and short-term spatial distribution of residential burglary. *International Journal of Police Science & Management*, 9(2), 99-111.

Ratcliffe, J. H., & McCullagh, M. J. (2001). Chasing ghosts? Police perception of high crime areas. *British Journal of Criminology*, 41(2), 330-341.

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The seductive idea of EBP

- Evidence-based policy as a “social movement”
- Many major developments in the name of evidence-based policing
- Few people disagree with the notion of evidence-based policing
- What constitutes the *evidence* in evidence-based policing?


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Randomistas versus Realists

- Randomised controlled trials (RCTs) as the “gold standard” evaluation evidence
- RCTs provide high quality evidence on the effects of an intervention (*did it work?*)
- The rigour of an evaluation is not associated with the generalisability of the finding
- Critical question: *Will it work for me?* Does evidence travel?

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Does evidence travel?




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What do decision makers need from evaluation evidence?

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“Experimenting Society”: What Works Network



“Improve the way government and other organisations create, share and use high quality evidence for decision-making”

“Generating and collating the evidence is of no use if it never reaches the commissioners and professionals who need it”

David Halpern, 2014



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EMMIE: What decision makers need to know

E = Effect (did *it* work?)

M = Mechanisms (how did *it* work?)

M = Moderators (in what conditions does *it* work best?)

I = Implementation (the challenges putting *it* in place?)

E = Economy (is *it* cost effective?)

Johnson, S. D., Tilley, N. and Bowers, K. J. (2015). Introducing EMMIE: An evidence rating scale to encourage mixed-method crime prevention synthesis reviews. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*.

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Does the available evidence speak to EMMIE?

- Identify, rate and rank the evidence reported in systematic reviews in crime reduction (n = 337)
- Evidence on Effect dominated but other elements of EMMIE were underreported
- Most systematic reviews say nothing about economics

What Works Crime Reduction Toolkit

ABOUT US RESEARCH CRIME REDUCTION TOOLKIT RESEARCH MAP GET INVOLVED

Home / Crime Reduction Toolkit

Crime Reduction Toolkit

Intervention Impact on crime How it works Where it works How to do it What it costs

| Intervention | Impact on crime | How it works | Where it works | How to do it | What it costs |
|---|-----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|
| Alcohol ignition interlock | ✓ | ⊙ | ⊙ | ? | ⊙ |
| Alcohol tax and price policies | ✓ | ⊙ | ⊙ | ? | ⊙ |
| CCTV | ✓ | ⊙ | ⊙ | ? | ⊙ |
| Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) for Domestic Violence | ✓ | ⊙ | ⊙ | ? | ⊙ |
| Correctional boot camps | X✓ | ⊙ | ⊙ | ? | ⊙ |
| Criminal sanctions to prevent domestic violence | X✓ | ⊙ | ⊙ | ? | ⊙ |

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Electronic tagging: Sex offences

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Impact on crime How it works Where it works How to do it What it costs

Effect Mechanism Moderator Implementation Economic cost

What is the focus of the intervention?

Electronic monitoring (EM) of offenders involves placing a tag around the ankle or wrist of an offender which, in combination with a receiving device, can verify their whereabouts at specified times. This allows the monitoring and enforcement of curfews between specific times or in specific locations, meaning the offender can be released into the community rather than serving time in a correctional institution. EM devices use either radio frequency (RF) or global positioning system (GPS), can send information in real time or lagged, and can be applied at any time in the criminal justice system from pre-trial to post-prison release, including as an alternative sentence to prison or parole without electronic monitoring. EM has been used on a variety of offenders and suspects, including those who are high risk, those who are suspected or convicted sex offenders, and suspected or convicted perpetrators of domestic violence.

This narrative is based on one systematic review covering 33 studies, 17 of which had sufficient information to carry out a meta-analysis. The majority of the primary studies were carried out in the USA.

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Requirements for and challenges in evidence-based policing

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Requirements for evidence-based policing

- Research evidence needs to exist
- Research evidence needs to be trustworthy
- Research evidence needs to be relevant
- Research evidence needs to be accessible
- There needs to be an appetite to locate and use research evidence (*demand not just supply*)
- There needs to be an openness to identify failure

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What influences UK police decision making?

- 8 out of 10 survey respondents use
 - Experience/professional judgement
 - Colleagues
- 5 out of 10 use
 - Conferences
 - College of Policing products
- 3 out of 10 consult academic research
- 1 in 10 use research databases
- Senior officers more likely to engage with research and be part of practitioner-researcher collaborations

Hunter, G., May, T. and Hough, M. (2017). An Evaluation of the 'What Works Centre for Crime Reduction' Final Report

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Barriers to police use of research

- Survey respondents say they lack the time to locate research to inform decisions (54%)
- Under half think academics produce research that is relevant to everyday policing (42%)
- Many felt research findings are unclearly presented and full of jargon (48%)
- Research evidence doesn't give clear enough answers to be usable in practice (34%)

Hunter, G., May, T. and Hough, M. (2017). An Evaluation of the 'What Works Centre for Crime Reduction' Final Report

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A way ahead

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Looking forward – ‘Tipping Point’ (Sherman, 2015)

- Be realistic, reform in any organisation is slow and tricky
- Support of senior/chief officers seems to be crucial
- Effective partnerships between police and universities can help - (critical friends) - EMMIE as a common language
- Broaden the scope of EBP beyond crime prevention (think drones, body worn cameras, TASERs)
- Create a "safe space" for experimentation; view failure as an opportunity to learn and improve
- Training and promotion prospects

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Conclusions

- It is too soon to know the impact of evidence-based policing
- Few disagree with the notion that police decisions (broadly defined) might usefully be informed by research evidence
- Much has been done to promote and facilitate evidence-informed ways of working
- Debate remains on the kinds of evidence needed to achieve the sought-after outcomes of evidence-based policing
- EMMIE sets out what decision makers need to know from research evidence; little research evidence provides such answers



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What Works Centre Crime Reduction Toolkit
<http://whatworks.college.police.uk/toolkit/Pages/Toolkit.aspx>
