

4.8 Be a guide to the high (and high) quality of the high

Many individuals and groups bring forward what they call evidence to address social challenges. 'Best evidence' in a given national (or sub-national) context is in the form of national (or sub-national) evidence drawn from the best available studies (i.e., what has been learned in what context) and global evidence drawn from the best available evidence syntheses (i.e., what has been learned from around the world, including how various subgroups and contexts' needs to be differentiated from 'other things' that are sometimes presented as evidence, such as a single study, an expert opinion, an expert panel, a research interest group, an anecdote dressed up as a case study, a hype paper, and a jurisdictional scan. Each of these other things brings with them a risk (column 2 below). At the same time, there are a host of more

We do not consider here 'other things' being those typically presented as research evidence, such as people's lived experiences (which we discuss in section 2.3 in the context of co-designed interventions) or Indigenous ways of knowing (which we discuss in [section 4.10](#) as part of a broader discussion about Indigenous peoples).

If presented with...	...which brings with it a risk of...	...then...	...or better yet...
Single study (including preprints)	'Hype chasing,'* or giving attention to each study that is advertised promoted by the authors, their media-relations office or others (as happened with the high-risk-of-bias study about hydrochloroquine discussed in section 3.7 and the now retracted study** about a link between vaccines and autism)	Ask for a critical appraisal of the study using ideal accepted quality criteria to understand the risk of bias and recognize what a statistically significant finding (at the 0.05 level) may be found by chance in one in 20 studies	Add the study to a 'living' evidence synthesis where it can be understood alongside other studies addressing the same question (or consider it as one of many types of national or sub-national evidence to be put alongside the best global evidence)
Expert opinion	'Speak the hell getting the grease' / 'eminence-based' (rather than evidence-informed) decision-making, or giving attention to those who command the greatest attention by virtue of persistence, reputation or other factors (as happened with the idealized election shows about the Scared Straight crime-prevention program even after evidence syntheses*** had found evidence of harm and no evidence of benefit)	Ask the expert to share the evidence (ideal evidence syntheses) on which the opinion is based, as well as the methods used to identify, assess, select and synthesize it	Engage the expert in working through that specific evidence syntheses mean for a specific jurisdiction, or in challenging a sort of thinking with different forms of evidence**** (or ask the expert what evidence would convince them they were wrong)
Expert panel	GOBSATT, or 'good old boys sitting around the table' offering their personal opinion	Ask the panel members to share the evidence (ideal evidence syntheses) on which their input and recommendations are based, as well as the methods used to identify, assess, select and synthesize it	Add methods expert to the panel (or secretariat), pre-circulate the best local (national or sub-national) and global evidence, support robust deliberation, and make explicit which

Jurisdictional scan 	'Gro p hink,' or people in man j risdiction rel ing on people in one j risdiction ho are illing o share heir e periences and inno a tions, b h a en e e al a ed hem	Ask or look for an a ailable s pporting e idence or plans for genera ing	
Research interest group****	Researchers ad oca ing for ad ion based on heir personal al es and preferences or heir professional in eres s	Ask gro ps h heir al es and preferences sho ld co n more han he cli ens e all ser e	Enco rage hem o base heir req es s on high-q al e idence s n heses
'Case study'	Anecdotal e periences gi en a name ha implies a rigoro s approach nderpins	Ask he rter ha criteria ere sed o sele he case, ha mi of da a-collec ion approaches ere sed, and ha anal ic and o her approaches ere sed o ens re rigoro	
White paper	Taking a face al e he implic or e plic asser ion ha e idence as sed in arri ing a a s a emen of polic preferences	Ask go ernmen leaders or ad isors o share he e idence he sed as a basis for heir inp and recommenda ions, as ell as he me hods sed o iden if , assess, sele and s n hesi e	

**** Note that societal interest groups may also invoke evidence in advocating for action based on their values and preferences, in which case the same response as in column 4 may be appropriate.