Lessons learned from behavioral decision research and behavior change interventions

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Interventions

• Risk governance includes
  – Informed public
  – Behavior change (where needed)

• Domains
  – Health
  – Household finance
  – Energy
Overview

1. 'Nudge' interventions
2. Educational interventions
3. Main lessons and challenges
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‘Nudge’ interventions

- Lesson from behavioral research:
  - When making choices, people often stick with the ‘default’ or ‘status quo’

- Intervention principle:
  - Set default to recommended option

- Application:
  - Choices for which there is a recommended option

(Thaler & Susstein “Nudge” 2008)
Organ donation programs

Default is ‘opt out’

Default is ‘opt in’

From: Johnson & Goldstein, Science, 2003
Example ‘default’ settings

• Auto-enrolment into retirement savings plan (vs. requiring signing up) increases participation

• Standard energy-efficient settings on programmable thermostats may increase electricity savings
Educational interventions

• Application:
  – Decisions *without* recommended option

• Lesson from behavioral research:
  – People are more likely to use information that is *personally relevant* and easy to understand

• Intervention principles:
  – Content is based on research with audience so as to cover wants and needs in understandable wording
Applications

• Patient decision aids
• Electricity bills
• Credit card statements

(Bekker et al., Patient Education and Counseling, 2010; Bruine de Bruin et al., Journal of Risk Research, in press; Canfield et al., in preparation; McHugh et al., Journal of Economic Psychology, 2011)
Information and skills training

A DVD teaching negotiation skills rather than just basic facts reduced STIs compared to control

Intervention design principles

http://ipdas.ohri.ca/


Presentations on YouTube from US NAS

[www.fda.gov/oc/advisory/OCRCACACpg.html](www.fda.gov/oc/advisory/OCRCACACpg.html)
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1. 'Nudge' interventions
2. Educational interventions
3. *Main lessons and challenges*
Main lessons (and challenges) for intervention designers

1. Effective interventions are based on behavioral findings gathered from the intended audience
   Challenges: Overcoming overconfidence in theories
                Committing resources

2. Interventions should be evaluated for effectiveness
   Challenges: Overcoming institutional resistance
                Committing resources
                Long-term follow-up