

November 28, 2007

To: Interested Colleagues

There is a very interesting rapid-learning initiative in the UK (<http://www.duets.nhs.uk>), described below, that might be of interest for the US - perhaps especially for mental health and social science-related policy questions.

The UK Database of Uncertainties about the Effects of Treatments (DUET) project will identify uncertainties that cannot be answered by existing research literature. It provides both a political and an intellectual basis to make bold and strategic decisions about new national funding. Politically, there probably are many serious people in the US, in responsible positions, with a lot of questions . . . Perhaps this could get underway in the US, with APA/COSSA support?

I also will send a copy of this UK announcement and suggestion to members of NSF's Government Performance and Results oversight Board: A national NSF-DUET system for the social & economic sciences would be useful feedback for NSF planning.

Even in limited areas of NSF's responsibility (e.g., math and science education) it could accelerate progress & build political support to identify, in a highly visible way, uncertainties about the effectiveness of policies and practices (e.g., the best methods in science and math education and how these can be determined for different students).

best regards,
Lloyd Etheredge

[from <http://www.duets.nhs.uk>]
What is DUETs?

The *Database of Uncertainties about the Effects of Treatments* (DUETs) has been established in the UK to publish uncertainties that cannot currently be answered by referring to reliable up-to-date systematic reviews of existing research evidence. Systematic reviews are based on worldwide searches for reliable, relevant evidence, analysed using methods to reduce biases and the play of chance. More detailed information about systematic reviews and fair tests of the effects of medical treatments is available in the *James Lind Library*.

DUETs draws on three main sources to identify uncertainties about the effects of treatments:
patients', carers' and clinicians' questions about the effects of treatments
research recommendations in reports of systematic reviews and clinical guidelines
ongoing research, both systematic reviews in preparation and new 'primary' studies

DUETs does **not** include unanswered questions about the frequency, causes and diagnosis of health problems.

What is DUETs for?

DUETs is being developed to help those prioritising research in the UK to take account of the information needs of patients, carers and clinicians, as promoted by the James Lind Alliance. The research needed may entail preparation of reliable up-to-date systematic reviews of existing evidence, if these are not available, or research to generate additional evidence if reliable up-to-date systematic reviews make clear that this is necessary. [More about uncertainties...]

Who contributes to DUETs?

DUETs is at an early stage of development, and its evolution continues to be based on exploring relatively unknown territory. For this reason, our search for uncertainties is restricted to contributors within the UK, with a view to informing prioritisation decisions for new research within the UK.

As DUETs has attracted interest from outside the UK, however, we have established an email discussion list for people involved in developing similar initiatives in other countries. [[View or join the discussion list...](#)].

What does the DUETs logo mean? [A question mark before the]

Many people are familiar with the ancient apothecaries' symbol because it is still used today on some treatment prescriptions [[more about the history of the symbol...](#)]. The question mark emphasises that we need to identify and record important uncertainties about the effects of treatments.