



RESEARCH2REALITY

Shining a light on research & innovation.

Governments Can't Be Science-Blind

An Interview with Professor Timothy Caulfield
Law, Health and Ethics Researcher, University of Alberta

How does research affect scientific policy?

At the core of a lot of work that we're doing, is not only just trying to inform science policy. You know – What should our stem cell laws be? What does the evidence say? – but we are also very very interested in how science is presented to the public, to policy makers, to healthcare professionals. And at a time when there's never been more scientific information out there, we think this is critically important.

How does your research work?

What are the principles at play? What are the ethical dilemmas at play? We look at all those broader, conceptual issues and then we try to define what an issue is, and then we bring in a wonderful interdisciplinary team – scientists, qualitative researchers, survey researchers, media researchers, we even have a linguist that we work with – to look at that issue in an empirical way.

What are the specific applications of your research?

I think that the deep controversies that surrounded stem cell research are a wonderful example of why independent academic research is so important. One of the things we do hope we can do is actually create policy. We live at a time when science is becoming a bigger part of our economy, it's becoming a bigger part of our health system, it's becoming a bigger part of individual lives. As a result of that, there are all these forces that are twisting science. Figuring out how we can support independent science, how we can communicate evidence to the public, to policy makers, in a way that is trustworthy, in a way that can have real impact, I think is becoming increasingly important and I see our team doing more and more work in that realm.