



Starting where people are

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NHS Plan, self-care and empowerment

Shift from sickness to prevention:

Making *healthy choices the easy choices*, focusing on early intervention and lifestyle support rather than waiting until illness develops.

Self-care as a core feature:

Managing long-term conditions will rely on patients being supported to take control of their own care.

Empowering individuals:

Giving people *knowledge, skills, and support* to manage their health, including digital tools and community-based resources.

Shared decision-making:

Patients active partners in their treatment, with clinicians working alongside them rather than dictating care.

Digital empowerment:

Technology will allow people to access health services, monitor conditions, and manage appointments as easily as online banking or shopping. Particularly thought the NHS App and HealthStore.

Mind the Gap!

The Living Self-Care Survey

Public and professional
attitudes to self-care



**Mind the
Gap!
Public/
professional
differences
on self-care
SCF/Imperial
2025**

**Self-Care Confidence, Professional Support
and Health Literacy in the UK: Findings from
the Living Self-Care Survey Study**

Peter Smith, Sami Altalib, Mahmoud Al Ammouri, Austen El-Osta
doi: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2025.06.01.25328745>

**Understanding Demographic Disparities and
Personal Barriers to Self-Care in the UK:
Findings from the Living Self-Care Survey
Study**

Austen El-Osta, Sami Altalib, Mahmoud Al Ammouri, Peter Smith
doi: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2025.06.01.25328757>

Mind the Gap - People

How confident are you that you have the knowledge & understanding to lead a healthy lifestyle

Fairly confident or very confident

88%

I'm encouraged by my GP/practice nurse/ pharmacist to play a more active role in staying healthy & treating common conditions myself

Usually or always

42%

I don't want any more responsibility over my health

Disagree or strongly disagree

12%

Mind the Gap - professionals

What in your opinion are the **main barriers to self-care** for your patients/clients?* (N = 227)

Individual reluctance to engage or take responsibility

65%

Patient/client understanding of self-care

59%



**Mind the
Gap!
Public/
professional
differences
on self-care**

The public believes it understands and is confident in its self-care, which is almost universal, but is not always encouraged by professionals.

Professionals see public willingness to engage and take responsibility are the main barriers to self-care

It's a big gap...

BMJ editorial: Dangers in consumer self-testing

July 2025;390:r1543 | doi: 10.1136/bmj.r1543

Wellness industry:

- 'quackery'
- 'a marketing trick to profit from healthy people'
- 'Target... young people who are healthy in any case.'

Check for updates

EDITOR'S CHOICE

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The dangers in consumer self-testing

Kamran Abbasi *editor in chief*

The world's wellness industry is worth trillions of dollars. The non-profit Global Wellness Institute claims that the wellness industry is worth four times as much as the drug industry.¹ That's a lot of money being spent on stuff that doesn't work and may even be harmful.

Trying to define wellness exposes the dangerous way in which it overlaps with physical and mental health. It's hard to feel "well" without physical and mental health. Talking of wellness also creates confusion with "wellbeing," which recognises that happiness and satisfaction are important contexts for physical health. But wellness takes us beyond these recognised concepts to a world of tests and interventions that are light on evidence but have become the stuff of memes, video shorts, influencer promotions, and online scams.

At the heart of this onslaught isn't anybody's wellness but a desire to persuade people to spend, spend, spend. Often the target is young people, who are mostly healthy in any case, but every generation is susceptible to the subtle and unsubtle pull of wellness quackery. Vogue, for example, happily recommends sleep gummies, digestive "alchemy" capsules, and infrared sauna blankets.² Throw in a few choice words—nutrition, data, energy—and the pursuit of beauty suddenly becomes essential. It becomes wellness.

The question is, where does wellness end and healthcare start? You might argue that consumer products that are lightly regulated, that claim health and wellbeing benefits, but are supported by scant evidence of clinical benefit, should be included in the definition. As such, the more clinical end of the wellness spectrum reveals an array of consumer diagnostic tests, available at any major or minor supermarket, that promise to do a quicker job than the health service in identifying (among others) chronic kidney injury, vitamin D deficiency, menopause, or hypothyroidism. However, this short cut is both an overpromise and potentially hazardous. Two studies by Birmingham University researchers expose the reluctance of manufacturers to share the data underlying these tests, deficiencies in the data supporting claims of accuracy, and inadequate consumer information accompanying the tests (doi:10.1136/bmj-2025-085547 doi:10.1136/bmj-2025-085546).³⁻⁵

Jessica Watson and Margaret McCartney point out that self-testing has value in testing for pregnancy or HIV, for example, but explain how it can be misleading, harmful, and burdensome for the health service (doi:10.1136/bmj.r1476).⁶ A *BMJ* investigation examines four problematic diagnostic tests more closely and explores the less-than-stringent regulation of self-tests that use CE marks (doi:10.1136/bmj.r1503).⁷ The Medicines and

Healthcare Products Regulatory Authority (MHRA) now requires post-marketing surveillance and reporting of significant incidents from manufacturers, but CE marks will continue to be recognised in Great Britain until 2030.

The wellness industry is clearly misnamed and vaguely defined. A better way to look at it is as a marketing trick to profit from healthy people and complicate the lives of those who are ill. It shifts workload to the publicly funded health service and introduces risks to health and wellbeing. Importantly, education and individual responsibility will take us only so far in protecting the public from the temptations of consumer products that promise health related benefits but whose evidence to support those claims of benefit doesn't stand up to scrutiny. How can an industry that is focused on keeping us well, is worth more than the drug industry, and sells products of doubtful benefit and possible harm directly to consumers, be so poorly regulated?

When it comes to diagnostic self-tests, the government and the MHRA must act now because the potential for harm, as demonstrated by this new research, is clear and present.

- 1 PR Newswire: The global wellness economy reaches a new peak of \$6.3 trillion—and is forecast to hit \$9 trillion by 2028. Yahoo.com. 5 Nov. 2024. <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/global-wellness-economy-reaches-peak-120000223.html>
- 2 Vogue: The Wellness Shop. <https://www.vogue.com/wellness-products>
- 3 Hiller E, Davis S, Akbari M, et al. Direct-to-consumer self-tests sold in the UK in 2023: cross-sectional review of regulation and evidence of performance. *BMJ* 2025;390:r1543 doi:10.1136/bmj-2025-085547 PMID: 40701636
- 4 Davenport C, Richter A, Hiller E, et al. Direct-to-consumer self-tests sold in the UK in 2023: cross-sectional review of information on intended use, instructions for use, and post-test decision making. *BMJ* 2025;390:r1543 doi:10.1136/bmj-2025-085546 PMID: 40701637
- 5 Watson J, McCartney M. The pitfalls of diagnostic self-tests. *BMJ* 2025;390:zmed.40701648
- 6 Coombes R, Baykizhev H, Jacobucci G. How safe are health tests on UK supermarket shelves? *BMJ* 2025;390:zmed.40701650

the *bmj* | *BMJ* 2025;390:r1543 | doi:10.1136/bmj.r1543

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Wellness

Wellness movement

Begun in 1950s by Dunn et al in response to WHO holistic definition:

'Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' (World Health Organisation 1948)

Developed in 70s by Ardella et al:

High-level wellness: An alternative to doctors, drugs and disease

5 dimensions of high-level wellness (1975)

- Self responsibility
- Nutritional Awareness
- Stress Management
- Physical Fitness
- Environmental sensitivity

SCF definition of self-care:

Self-care is the actions that individuals take for themselves, on behalf of and with others in order to develop, protect, maintain and improve their health, wellbeing or wellness.

Bridging the gap:

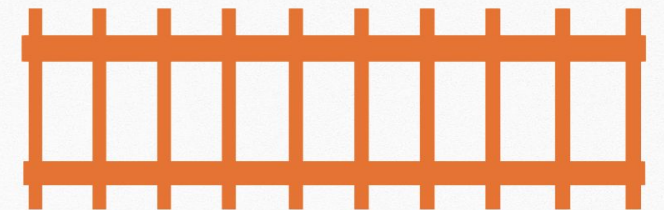
**An information
reliability
continuum**



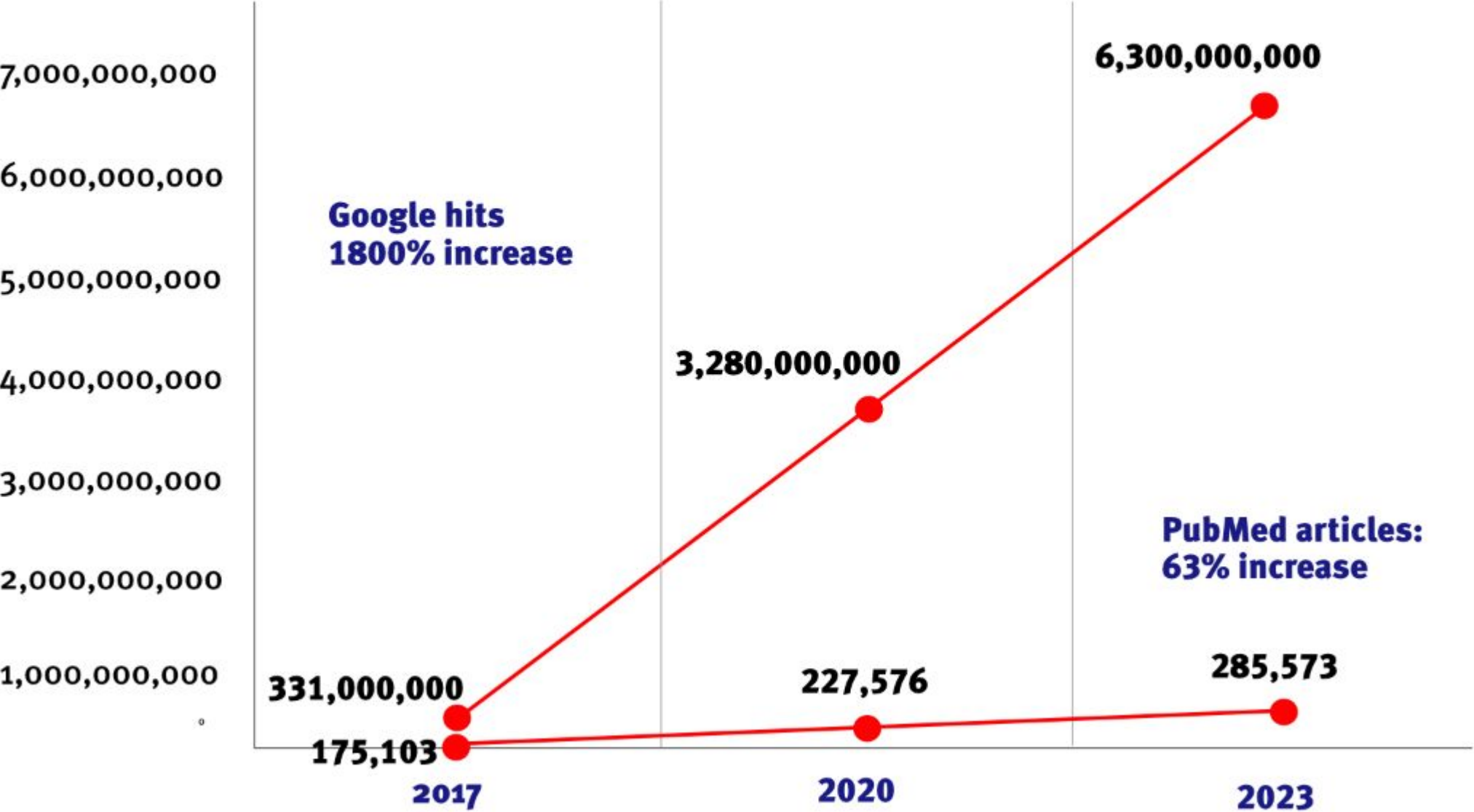
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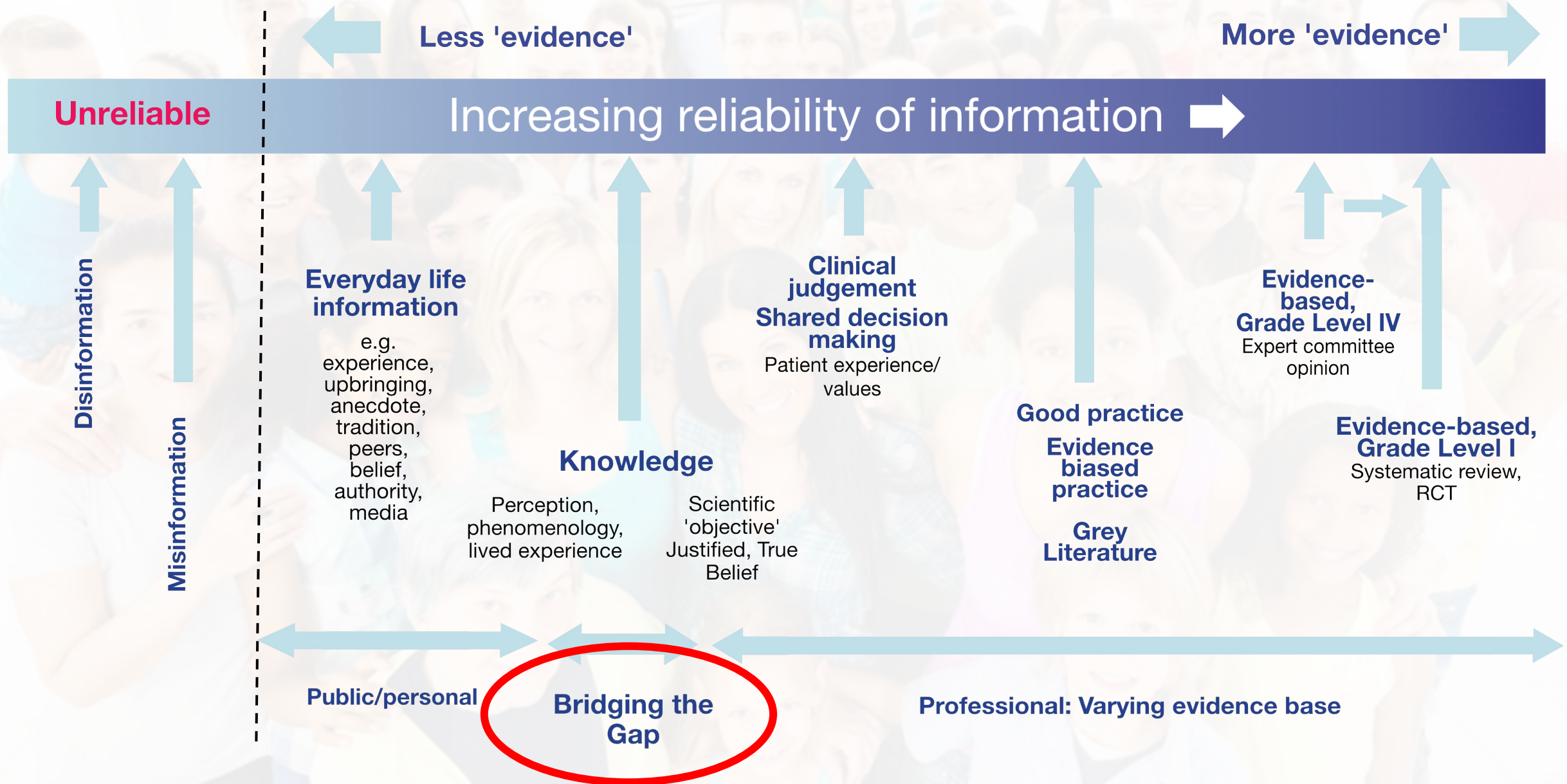
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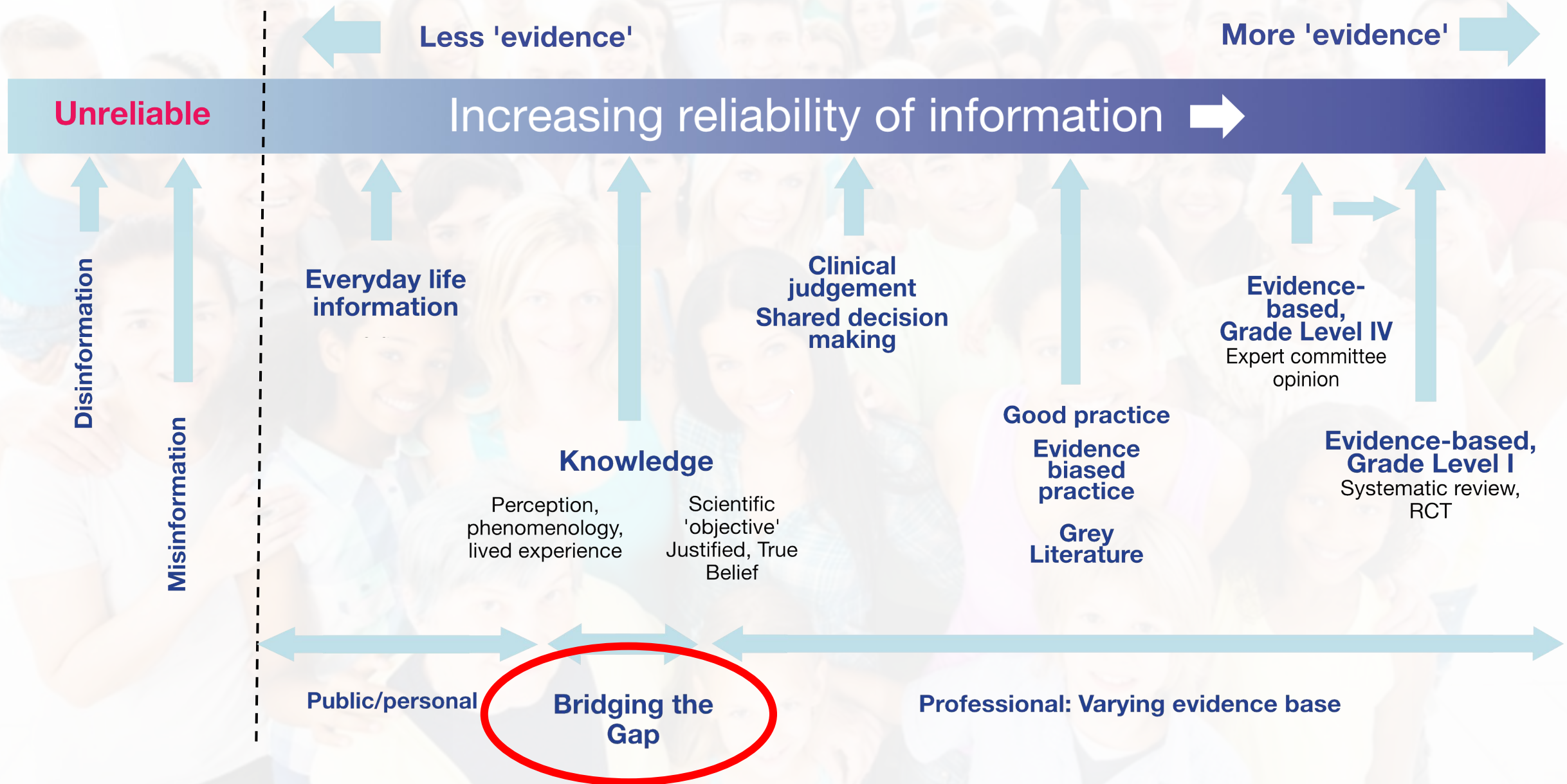
Google Hits & PubMed articles 2017-2023: 'self-care'



Information reliability continuum



Information reliability continuum



Building bridges

People

- Start from where people are
- Respect, and persuade don't infantilise
- Provide reliable information – UK PIF Tick
- Make it readable to a wide audience: age: 9-11
- Education: Self-care in schools
- Stop lobbing grenades over barriers, start building bridges
- 'Responsible well', not worried well

Professionals:

- Self-care and individual empowerment throughout the curriculum and CPD

Misinformation

- Help people recognise distinction between mis and disinformation e.g. *Unmasked*

... for the 10YHP to be delivered

