Using Evidence in Decision-Making

Evidence-based practice (EBP)

Evidence-based practice is an approach to decision-making that integrates the best available evidence with clinical expertise and patient values. Guided by their expertise, and in consultation with patients and their families, clinicians use the best information from research to choose the most appropriate care for each patient. Evidence can come from a range of sources including scientific journals and other publications, population health statistics and locally collected data.

**Evidence-based decision-making**

Application of EBP is usually confined to the clinical setting, however it is just as appropriate in organisational decisions about service planning and decisions about population health strategies. The same 3-part model can be used. An evidence-based decision will take into account the best available evidence, the expertise of the relevant professional groups and the values and perspectives of the population that will be affected by the outcome.

**There are 5 steps of evidence-based decision-making:**

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<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Asking questions that arise in clinical practice</td>
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| 2 | Accessing evidence from  
  - Research and local data  
  - Relevant professional groups  
  - Relevant patients, consumers or populations |
| 3 | Appraising the evidence for quality and relevance and making recommendations for practice |
| 4 | Applying the evidence, integrated with clinical experience and patient preferences |
| 5 | Analysing the impact of the application of evidence on the process and outcome of patient care |

**Synthesis of evidence**

**Implementation of best practice**

**Evaluation of change**
Evidence-based change processes

The principles of an evidence-based approach can also be applied to the steps involved in the process of organisational change. Examples of this type of change include establishing new models of service delivery, introducing new clinical practice guidelines or instituting new systems for decision-making.

Depending on the context, the process could be very straightforward or extremely complex, however the same four key steps will be encountered: identifying the need for change, developing a proposal to address the need, implementing the proposal and evaluating the results.

Applying the principles of evidence-based decision-making to the steps in a change process ensures that the best available evidence, the experience and expertise of health service personnel, and the views and perspectives of consumers are taken into account in each key decision.

To increase the likelihood of effective, efficient and enduring change, factors related to sustainability must be identified and addressed, duplication avoided and integration with existing systems facilitated. An action research approach will facilitate implementation and evaluation.

This model is used by the Centre for Clinical Effectiveness in undertaking projects involving change in healthcare systems.