
Section 4 Evidence Component

Acquiring Evidence Part 1: Types of Evidence

Overview

The goal of this session is to assist the participant in linking the practice question to the 2nd step in the EPB process – “acquiring” the best available evidence. Within this module, evidence is defined and types (categories) of evidence are reviewed.

Objectives

- Define the concept of evidence.
- Describe the various categories of evidence.
- Recognize different types of evidence.
- Define “best available evidence”.

Key Points

- Evidence is information used to answer clinical questions.
- An “evidence based” practice recommendation or policy is different from a “reference based” practice recommendation or policy.
- Evidence can be categorized as research (research based guidelines, systematic reviews, and primary research) or non-research (QI data, textbooks, expert opinion).
- No one category or type of evidence is better than another; rather the type of evidence required is dependent on the focus of the practice question.
- Types of evidence are frequently displayed in a multi-tiered evidence pyramid. Each tier (or level) represents a distinct method for generating evidence. The view that “*the higher the level, the better the evidence*” is somewhat misleading. While research designs higher on the pyramid have the *potential* to produce more credible evidence; knowing the evidence level doesn’t automatically convey proof of its quality or clinical relevance.
- **Not all evidence is created equal.** Keep in mind that ***best available evidence*** is high quality, clinically applicable evidence that comes from well-designed methods best suited for answering the practice question.
- It is helpful to start your search by looking for evidence-based guidelines and systematic reviews. If none are found, search for primary research. If no research studies are found, look for QI projects and/or EBP implementation projects.
- After evidence is located, it is vital to critically appraise the evidence for type, quality and usefulness using pre-established criteria. Critical appraisal will be covered in separate modules.



Suggested Activities

Practice Application Exercise

1. Present examples of different types of evidence (articles, texts, and facility data) and ask participants to identify the type of evidence. Tailor examples to participants. Evidence should include: RCT, cohort, descriptive, and qualitative study, a systematic review, an evidence-based guideline, and findings from a performance improvement activity or benchmarked data. (See link to sample articles under Materials below). Discuss how the participant identified the type of evidence (e.g., design was part of title, author mentioned design in the article).
2. Provide each participant with a current nursing procedure or policy in their area of practice. Each participant will review the references and identify the type of evidence used to support the policy. Ask the participants to identify whether the policy/procedure is reference based or evidence based.

Personal Commitment to EBP Exercise

1. Ask the participants to share some of the important take-home points that they have learned about this step in the EBP process.
2. How will you use what you learned in your practice?

Materials are available through the provided hyperlink:

Practice Exercise Supplement [Types of Evidence Sample Articles](#)

Suggested Time 60 minutes