

book review

Evidence-based Health Care: An Open Learning Resource for Health Care Practitioners

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The Evidence-based Health Care resource is a training pack for health professionals. It focuses on incorporating evidence-based healthcare into practice. This second edition of July 2002 is very similar to its predecessor, although the layout is much clearer.

The resource comprises five manuals, each called a Unit, as follows:

- Unit 1. What is Evidence-based health care?
- Unit 2. Asking the question and finding the evidence.
- Unit 3. Appraising and interpreting the evidence.
- Unit 4. Acting on the evidence.
- Unit 5. Evaluation and reflection.

Offprints of papers referred to in the Units and a glossary and included in a separate manual.

The manuals are effectively laid out. Each is self-contained and subdivided into sections. Each section has a set of learning outcomes at the start and a summary at the end. The text is broken up by simple diagrams and lists of short points that illustrate key concepts very effectively. A short paragraph at the end of each section introduces the next and serves to link the sections together. The only distracting features are the boxes in the margins. The information in these boxes is not of any particular genre, ranging from contact details of groups to short explanations of cases discussed in the text. The information could perhaps have been equally effectively included in the text, or moved to the appendix.

A strength of the resource is that it is useful on many levels. For people who would like an overview of the area or would like to refresh their knowledge of the subject, the resource provides a useful summary of the main aspects of finding and applying evidence-based health care to practice.



For those wishing to pursue the subject for academic reasons, the sections on research methodologies and study designs are detailed and include both quantitative and qualitative research. Additionally, the lists of references provide a cross-section of the literature in this area for further reading.

The manuals do not concentrate solely on imparting details to those people interested only in the academic aspects of gathering evidence. The resource

states that it is aimed at healthcare professionals. Indeed, anyone wishing to familiarise themselves with evidence-based healthcare would find it useful for developing practical skills such as critical reading of research papers, searching for evidence and making use of it in clinical decisions. The resource also provides a step-by-step guide to introducing evidence-based practice into an organisation, be it a department, ward or team, and includes additional training in evaluating change

and planning for continued development. The inclusion of offprints eliminates the need to search for relevant papers, thus facilitating the learning process for busy practitioners.

Overall, the resource is a useful learning package for all practitioners at any level. Given the current drive to encourage evidence-based decision-making, this resource is essential reading for anyone looking to improve their knowledge or skills in the area.