

Editorial: Evidence Based Medicine

Evidence Based Medicine (EBM) is "the conscientious, explicit and sensible use of current best practice in making decisions about the care of individual patients¹". Components include the use of evidence, clinical judgement and patient preference. Clinical judgement is vital in the evidence based approach to care because the evidence found may not be relevant a specific patient².

Others³ have added a mathematical dimension to the definition, "evidence based medicine is the use of mathematic estimates of the risk of benefit and harm, derived from high quality research on population samples, to inform decision making in the diagnosis, investigation or management of individual patients".

The agreed classification of evidence based information sources starts with those most likely to provide the best evidence (although there is some overlap between the various types) - and is as follows:

- 1a. **Meta analysis**
- 1b. **Randomised controlled trials**
- 2a. **Non Randomised controlled trials studies**
- 2b. **Quasi experimental studies**
3. **Descriptive studies**
4. **Consensus Report**

This hierarchy provides a guide to retrieving relevant studies and an orderly way of seeking the best evidence. In order to help you retrieve information, Anne Lancey, in the first of two articles, describes on page 12 a systematic way of accessing literature through Pub Med and other databases.

Finally, to practice EBM, the following steps are recommended:

1. Start with a clinical problem or a question that arises out of the care of a particular patient. Make this into a clear clinical question.
2. Select the appropriate literature database and conduct a search.
3. Evaluate that evidence for its validity (closeness to the truth) and applicability (usefulness in clinical practice).
4. Return to the patient and integrate that evidence with clinical expertise, patient preferences and apply it to practice.

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Editor, Southern Sudan Medical Journal

References

1. Sackett D.L. et al. Evidence based medicine, what it is and what it isn't. *BMJ* 1996; 312:71 – 72.
2. Aveyard H & Sharp P 2009 A beginners guide to evidence based practice in health and social care professions. *Open University Press*.
3. Greenhalgh T. 2009. How to read a paper, the basics of evidence based medicine. 3rd Edition *BMJ Publication*.

A new name and a new website

The Southern Sudan Medical Bulletin has been renamed the **Southern Sudan Medical Journal** and will soon have its own website. Since it was started two years ago the Bulletin has become more widely known (and, we hope, read). It is presently the only medical journal in Southern Sudan. Our aim is extend its reach and to continue to give relevant and valid information to health professionals in Southern Sudan.

The Southern Sudan Medical Journal (previously Southern Sudan Medical Bulletin) is a quarterly publication intended for Healthcare Professionals working in the Southern Sudan or those Healthcare Professionals in other parts of the world seeking information on health in the Southern Sudan.

It aims to offer education and information in all specialities and identify research that will inform the development of Health Services in the Southern Sudan. We plan to include reports of original research, critical/systematic reviews, case reports, clinical photographic materials, obituaries, letters to the Editor, use of drugs, medical news of public interest, nutrition matters, public health issues and stories of the health services in the Southern Sudan.

The Journal is a publication of the St Mary's Juba link. It is published in February, May, August and November and is free online at <http://www.iow.nhs.uk/juba> (under journals).

We encourage readers to print copies and pass them to colleagues.

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