Useful tips at your finger tips


This book by Rob Herbert and colleagues is the first book on Evidence Based Practice (EBP) targeted specifically at physiotherapy. The contribution of authors from around the world brings a unique international perspective to EBP within physiotherapy and the wider community. Whilst there has been a flood of books addressing issues of EBP in health care, this one manages to provide a good balance of theoretical concepts and practical issues of EBP in physiotherapy. The target audience would be physiotherapy professionals working in academic, research and health care service delivery settings, and students of physiotherapy (under- and postgraduate).

Structurally, the book is appropriately set out for a busy academic and/or researcher, or a student wanting timely access to information. The type size and layout of the content is user friendly. The book is well structured, with individual chapters focusing on key constructs underpinning EBP. The opening chapter provides a summary of each chapter and sets the scene on what each aims to deliver. There is an appropriate mixture of figures and tables to supplement textual information. Additionally, individual chapters are broken down into key sections. These simple, yet effective strategies make for effortless reading. Some chapters also provide ‘screen captures’ of information available on the internet (such as The Cochrane Library webpage, and Critically Appraised Paper section of the Australian Journal of Physiotherapy). These ‘screen captures’ help readers relate to theoretical concepts (such as database searching) presented in the chapters. Each chapter also has an extensive reference list providing a source of additional information for interested readers.

In terms of history and relevance of EBP, this book clearly sets the scene on the importance of EBP in the current health care climate and its historical origins. It provides a balanced definition specific to physiotherapy and a justification on why this differs from contemporary definitions of EBP. The book comprehensively addresses the five-step framework for EBP learning as proposed by Dawes et al (2005):

**Step one** – Answerable question formulation;
**Step two** – Literature search and retrieval of evidence;
**Step three** – Critical appraisal of evidence;
**Step four** – Application of evidence into clinical practice; and
**Step five** – Evaluation of performance.

The authors use clinical examples to ground theoretical principles. The authors clearly set out issues that are pertinent at each step and provide practical examples to ensure success in each step.

One of the key strengths of this book, and an integral aspect which previous books have failed to address, is the section on implementation of evidence in clinical practice. In the last decade there have been growing numbers of publications promoting evidence for numerous physiotherapy assessments and interventions. However, strategies to implement this growing evidence base in clinical practice are lacking. The authors provide insight into barriers to practice change and highlight practical evidence-based strategies to implement evidence in clinical practice. They also provide examples of cost effective and sustainable initiatives in monitoring outcomes subsequent to the implementation of evidence into clinical practice.

While this book is physiotherapy-specific, the content is generalisable to other allied health care professions. However, it must be recognised that they may subscribe to a broader notion of ‘evidence’. Currently momentum is developing to recognise the important role qualitative research could play in informing EBP (see Green and Britten 1998, Marks 2002) and the limitations of positivist epistemology underpinning EBP (Marks 2002). Expansion of qualitative research evidence and its role in EBP would further strengthen this book and its applicability to the wider allied health professions. In terms of accessing evidence, it might be worthwhile to report and debate the merits and drawbacks of generic critical appraisal tools. Generic critical appraisal tools are useful when confronted with varying levels of evidence within a topic of interest (see Law et al 1998). Increasingly, ‘grey’ literature also provides opportunities to access evidence which otherwise may not be available through mainstream databases (such as MEDLINE and CINAHL). While the authors have briefly touched on the World Wide Web as an additional source of evidence, other sources could have been expanded, such as organisational websites, content experts, and pearlring (whereby reviewers scan reference lists of identified publications as an additional source of literature which might otherwise have been missed in a systematic search.)

Overall, this book provides for the first time a physiotherapy-centric perspective on EBP; it would be a valuable resource for any reader involved in education, research, and delivery of physiotherapy health care.

Saravana Kumar
Centre for Allied Health Evidence, South Australia

References