Evidence-Based Practice Forum

Choosing Books to Guide Evidence-Based Practice

In this issue of The American Journal of Occupational Therapy®, I have described two books that practitioners can use as guides for incorporating evidence into practice decisions and that educators can use to teach elements of evidence-based practice (see Book Reviews, p. 111. New books on evidence-based practice are appearing rapidly, giving practitioners and educators the opportunity to choose approaches that work best for their settings and needs. I have found that there is no single book that perfectly addresses all of the steps and elements of evidence-based practice. Rather, each book may be best for addressing a subset of the steps and elements or may be more useful in one practice setting and less useful in another.

Practitioners may find it helpful to ask themselves the following questions when choosing a book to add to their evidence-based practice library:

• Does the book give guidance for seeking, evaluating, using, or developing research evidence that is relevant to answering the clinical questions that arise with my client population in my practice setting?
• Is the guidance presented in succinct and useful formats that can be easily accessible in my busy daily practice? For example, are there easy-to-find decision-making algorithms, flow charts, or step-by-step guiding questions?
• Does the book describe and explain research methods and scientific terminology in a manner that is highly informing to me at my research skill level?
• Does the book help me to implement evidence-based practice in my practice setting with the library, staff, and time resources available to me?

Educators who are teaching a generic evidence-based practice course will want to ask themselves a set of similar questions when selecting texts for their course:

• Does the book give guidance for seeking, evaluating, using, or developing research evidence that is relevant to answering the clinical questions that arise with client populations across occupational therapy practice settings?
• Is the guidance presented in succinct and useful formats that can be easily accessible to students when they enter their fieldwork experiences?
• Does the book describe and explain research methods and scientific terminology in a manner that is highly informing to entry-level master’s degree students?
• Does the book provide useful guidance to students for how to implement evidence-based practice in practice settings that have limited library, staff, and time resources?

In my opinion, the first book one needs for an evidence-based practice library is a solid research methods text. Such a text is not meant to be read carefully from cover to cover, but is kept for reference purposes. Many books that have evidence-based practice in the title assume that the practitioner receives in-depth guidance about basic research and scientific terminology and procedures from another source—either a research methods text or an expert, such as a data analyst or statistician. Therefore, it is useful for either new or seasoned practitioners to have a comprehensive text on hand. There are many excellent research methods textbooks on the market, and choosing the text largely derives from personal preference. One that I currently use in my teaching is Portney and Watkins's (2000) Foundations of Clinical Research: Applications to Practice. This book is comprehensive, easy to read and follow, and relevant to many practice domains, and it provides high-quality description and explanation about the research methods of the two scientific paradigms I discuss in my book review (i.e., clinical epidemiology and psychology). Using this text or one of many other excellent ones, students and practitioners can find in-depth information to help them understand a broad range of methods and statistics found in research reports.

If you have a book or other resource that you have found useful for practicing or teaching evidence-based practice, please send me the title, a short description of how you have used the resource,

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your name, title, and address to tickle@bu.edu. If there are enough responses, I will compile them for a future Forum. ▲

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