

# EVIDENCE BASED MEDICINE

## What it is — and the librarian's contribution to the process

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What do we do with the ever increasing information overload? Patients, doctors, and health authorities, all crave for more reliable information. What can be trusted in the flood of medical information? What information is proven knowledge, affirmed and reaffirmed through clinical practice, and what is merely grounded on tradition? How can one tell?

Evidence Based Medicine (EBM) is a hot topic for clinicians. According to the definition EBM is "the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients." EBM emphasizes systematic approach to medical literature as a basis for making decisions concerning treatment of a patient or group of patients — equally important for clinicians in hospital and primary care. Consequently the process of collecting, organising, critically assessing and systematically reviewing the medical literature becomes of greatest importance, and in this respect librarians can act as important contributors and co-workers. Searching for literature is something that librarians are traditionally particularly good at, while searching techniques can be improved in order to retrieve references with higher quality content. Medical resources and databases dedicated to systematic reviewing of medical literature have been developed over the years to meet the demand for quick retrieval of high quality evidence, for instance the *Cochrane Library* and *Best Evidence: Linking Medical Research to Practice*. So called methodology filters have been developed for making Medline search strategies more effective, and thus providing the clinicians a more reliable foundation for their decisions.

Evidence Based Medicine is no longer and by no means a new area of medicine but represents still a new unplowed territory for many librarians. Librarians who know the methods and can use the principles on which it is based, will play an important role in this interesting field of work.