

How evidence-based practice informs social support for an older person?

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Introduction

This report explains the concept of evidence-based research and research (EBRAP), its main principles and goals. It provides a background of its application in healthcare. It also discusses benefits of EBRAR, also discussing challenges of implementing it in practice. Finally, it provides a recommendation for improvement of EBPAP and provides a conclusion. This report considers using evidence-based research and practice when providing care to the elderly. Working as a carer of the older people is a very responsible task that often requires making critical decisions to that should lead to improvement in health and quality of life.

Undoubtedly, implementing a treatment that is unjustified and unbiased by facts and scientific research can be a risk to someone's health. Professional should be always aware that their knowledge is limited. It is not acceptable to risk someone's health or life by neglecting medical evidence and other people's expertise, as well as client's preferences.

Evidence based practice and research (EBPAR) in healthcare

Along with an advancement in medical science and an increase of number of researches, healthcare and care professionals should rely on well-documented and proven knowledge.

Evidence-based practice and research is a combination clinical expertise, professional opinion and judgement, scientific medical evidence, as well as client's preferences, feedback and perspective (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2019).

In case when there needs to be a decision made when caring for a vulnerable person, it is apparent that performing a research, as well as listening to client's feedback are beneficial and effective (Austria, 2021). Following that idea, a generally recommended approach to use in nursing and care is *Evidence based practice and research (EBPAR)*.

Evidence-based practice is a term that originates from medical terminology and is created from "evidence-based medicine" that appeared in early 90's (Guyatt, 1991) and was inspired by treating a 70-year old person suffering from fatigue, providing an example of applying research and clinical expertise in practice. In the following years, an evidence-based medicine group officially introduced a concept of "evidence-based practice" (Chrisman, et al., 2014).

The main goal of EBP is to improve quality of care provided, as well as to bring better results of a treatment (Adelphi University, 2022). It has been recommended for nursing and carer practitioners, and it has been found to be effective in improving outcomes (Black, et al., 2016).

There are various research designs that can help approach a research problem, such as screening and diagnosis, but specifically important when caring for the elderly – quality of life. For a screening problem, reference standard can be used, for assessing quality of life, quantitative studies, for instance, case studies (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, brak daty).

The EDP process consists usually of several steps (Melnik, Bernadette Mazurek, 2010). The first one is to define a question. For example, how can you help improve quality of life of an elder suffering from Alzheimer's. The next step is to collect relevant evidence basing on scientific sources. Then, once the evidence is gathered, a professional should evaluate the sources. The three components of EDPAR are applied at the decisive stage – evidence, clinical expertise and client's preference. If a plan is being implemented, it is crucial to monitor changes and intermediate results, making evaluations and adjustments if needed.

Benefits of evidence based practice and research

Evidence-based practice and research is a concept that is highly recommended in a nursing and a medical field and has numerous benefits (Black, et al., 2016). It is considered to lead to a higher quality of provided care, while diminishing a risk of harm. Questionable and uncertain treatments should be discarded, while well-researched and tested methods are applied. Not only it poses a lower health risk to a client, but also it also saves time and money that can be spent on ineffective ways of treating (McGill.CA, 2020). It promotes learning and research, increasing knowledge of the caring and nursing staff. This way, medical staff can improve their skills and quality of services they provide.

The elderly should be treated with special care, because their lower immune system effectiveness and ability to regenerate, and EBP aims to make the process of decision-making more straightforward and easy to follow. When deciding to start a new treatment, a carer must take risk factors into account and inform the client about the potential risk.

Another important advantage of using evidence-based practice and research is enabling a client in making a decision about their treatment. The client is satisfied if they feel that they can make an impact and decide about themselves based on research and evidence presented by a carer and a nurse (McGill.CA, 2020).

According to a study, a majority of nurses - 75% - have expressed a positive opinion about EBP (Nesrin N. Abu-Baker, 2021). It shows that the medical staff approves effectiveness of EBP as they believe brings better treatment outcomes, sets a standard of action amongst many other benefits.

Using external resources, doing an insightful research can often bring new things into perspective, exclude potentially harmful treatments and bring new ideas (McGill.CA, 2020).

Challenges of implementing evidence based practice and research

Evidence-based practice and research is unquestionably a great approach in a medical field, though, it is not always easy to implement it in real world and differs basing on different factors. There are various challenges that can be encountered while applying EBP.

One of the main challenges is a limited access to learning resources, as well as the Internet (Melnik, Bernadette Mazurek, 2010). A medical practitioner or a carer should have access to as many scientific resources as possible. However, it is not always easy to do, as many relevant research papers may not be available to public.

Another difficulty can be getting a useful clinical expertise. A level of communication between healthcare providers needs to be high for the stage of getting clinical expertise to be effective.

Going through stages of EBP can be a lengthy process that can be difficult to apply in every case. Currently, there is a shortage of nurses and caring staff, meaning they often have to work overtime and must attend all of their patients. Finding sufficient time to spend time on research, finding the best treatment is time-consuming (Melnik, Bernadette Mazurek, 2010).

When using EBP to improve the quality of care to the elderly, it is crucial that a carer considers their age in their research. Results of a medical trial can be different for young adults compared to people in their later stages of life.

The elderly may be sometimes reluctant to proposed treatments, not having enough trust in novel methods. Without their consent, even an effective and proven treatment should not be put in

practice. Therefore, it is also important for a carer to have good communication skills and be able to discuss benefits of a treatment, along with potential risks and side effects.

Recommendation

I believe that EBPAP is a great approach for providing care and should continue to be used. There needs to be a higher level of focus on EBPAP, such as providing trainings on how to implement it in practice. It would be useful if carers and medical professionals go through periodical training and exams, where they need to be given a scenario to handle using EBPAP and be evaluated during an exam, or write a report. It would ensure that the staff is fully trained, understands benefits of EBPAP. It should be also ensured that the staff is given enough time to use EBPAP in their working hours.

Conclusion

EBPAP enables taking the full benefits of medical research and advancement to help people. It promotes a problem-solving approach, leading from a question to a conclusion or a decision. Most importantly, it contributes to improvement of treatment outcomes, where decisions are based on science and client's preferences. When taking care of the elderly, similarly to other vulnerable group, it is essential that overall health factors and older age are taken into account and cannot be dismissed during the process.

EBPAP makes the medical process and finding a solution easier to follow, safer and more efficient. It is found to be preferable by healthcare professionals, who see benefits of using it. However, there are some challenges. When dealing with a rare case of an elder, it is harder to find satisfactory scientific resources that can help answer the question, and it becomes a dilemma whether it is safe to apply a certain way of actions for an elder. It is generally better not to take the risk if a question could not be fully answered.

Unfortunately, the expectations from the carers of the elderly are high, as they need to be ready to support and attend their clients. Finding time for them to conduct a research and go through a full process is difficult.

All things considered, EBPAP is an effective way of improving healthcare, including care of the elderly. Therefore, it is extremely important that the professionals are sufficiently trained, educated and can understand scientific literature, apply critical thinking and come to right conclusions.

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