

## Update 20

### Should chiropractic be forced into the Evidence-based Health Care box?

The introduction to a recently published study observed that,

“Evidence-based medicine (EBM) has emerged as an influential model for the teaching and practice of clinical medicine. Although the concept has been successfully disseminated in the health care field, there have been numerous criticisms advanced. Arguments have been put forth that EBM represents reductionism by its narrow definition of evidence; ignores the legitimacy of clinical judgement, experience, and the time constraints of non-academic practice; fails to include and respond to patient values; fosters an inappropriate reliance on epidemiology and statistical methodology, particularly a dogmatic adherence to the RCT; lacks empirical justification; and is poorly specified for some aspects of clinical medicine such as primary care.” (1)

The study goes on to suggest that,

“...there is little empirical evidence of how evidence-based practice is actually perceived by physicians in relation to clinical expertise and patient preferences”,

and that,

“...the objective of this study was to explore physician attitudes to and experience of the practice of EBM in primary care, specifically with respect to perceived benefits and barriers, the influence of patient preferences, and the role of intuition in clinical decisionmaking”. (1)

The authors proceeded by making a qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews of 15 family physicians purposively selected from participants of a survey derived from a random sample of Canadian family physicians.

The authors found that although the participants mainly welcomed the promotion of EBM in the primary care setting, a significant number of barriers and limitations to the implementation of EBM were identified.

Issues regarding the trustworthiness and credibility of evidence were of great concern, especially with respect to the influence of the pharmaceutical industry.

The participants felt that attempts to become more evidence-based often result in the experience of conflicts.

It was found that EBM is perceived by some physicians to be a devaluation of the 'art of medicine' and a threat to their professional/clinical autonomy.

The authors conclude,

“A widespread belief that intuition plays a vital role in primary care reinforced views that research evidence must be considered alongside other factors such as patient preferences and the clinical judgement and experience of the health care provider”.

### Reference:

1.) Tracy S, Dantas GC, Upshur RE. Evidence-based medicine in primary care: a qualitative study of Canadian family physicians. *BMC Fam Pract* 2003;4:6.