

Awareness of Evidence-Based Practice and Cochrane Library among Allied Health Care Professionals

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Abstract

Objective:

Evidence based practice has become the necessity of this era. This paper is aimed to assess the awareness and use of evidence-based practice (EBP) and the Cochrane Library among different allied health care professionals working in major public sector hospitals in Karachi.

Material and Methods:

This was a cross-sectional study conducted among 100 allied health care workers who had been recruited from Civil Hospital, Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC), and Dow University of Health Sciences (DUHS) using convenience sampling method. Self-administered questionnaire was used as an outcome measure. Descriptive statistics is represented through mean, SD and frequency percentages while chi square was applied for comparison of awareness levels.

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Results:

Results showed that 62% subjects reported having heard of EBP, 41% marked having understanding of principles. Awareness of systematic reviews has been observed in 48%. Regarding the Cochrane Library, 35% had some understanding while 18% accessed it. The hindrances to use were lack of training were found in (67%) and limited institutional access (58%). Awareness was higher among younger professionals and those with fewer than five years of experience.

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Conclusion:

The findings suggests that though allied health care professionals have **Open Access**. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the CC-BY License.

good awareness regarding the evidence based practice and Cochrane but the use is still limited. There is a need to integrate EBP and use of data bases like Cochrane in institutions to encourage the students and professionals.

Keywords: *Evidence-based practice; Cochrane Library; allied health professionals; Karachi; awareness.*

Introduction

Evidence-based practice (EBP) is the base for every decision related to health care field. It is a key strategy to improve the quality of health care delivery focusing on the integration of the best available research evidence with clinical expertise and patient values^[1]. Among all data bases, Cochrane Library serves as one of the most extensive and authoritative sources of systematic reviews. It not only provides information but ensures the quality of the systematic review as well and helps in guiding decision-making^[2]. In high-income countries, EBP has also been included and implemented in the academic curriculum to improve the clinical practice resulting in better quality care^[3,4]. This is still under development in low- and middle-income countries as due to barriers such as inadequacy of infrastructure, no or limited internet access, training limitations^[5-6]. Allied health professionals such as a physical therapist, speech therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, medical technologists are the part of the integral team^[7]. Their capability to apply the evidence based practice and make proper decisions is vital. Despite this, literature doesn't ensure the awareness of EBP among allied health professionals especially the use of data bases such as the Cochrane Library^[8,9]. According to the previous literature, awareness of EBP was moderate in Saudi Arabia and India, practically obstructed by lack of support from different resources^[10-11]. As for sub-Saharan African continent, some papers highlighted infrastructural and technical challenges as major barriers^[12]. In Pakistan, most papers show results are related to physicians' and nurses with a very few studies on allied health professionals^[13-14]. Therefore, this study is conducted to check the awareness and use of EBP and Cochrane Library among Allied Health Care Professionals.

Methods

This cross-sectional study was conducted at Civil Hospital, Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC), and Dow University of Health Sciences (DUHS) in Karachi. A total of 100 allied health professionals were recruited through convenience sampling method. Inclusion criteria included allied health professionals with a minimum experience of one year. Undergraduate students or unwilling participants had been excluded. A self designed self administered questionnaire has been **Open Access**. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the CC-BY License.

given. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics had been calculated for demographics and awareness items. Chi-square test was applied to check the associations between variables. P- Value of <0.05 was considered significant.

Results

Demographical characteristics shows 52% females around 20 to 30 years (57%). 46% having less than five years of professional experience as shown in Table 1.

Table:1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants

| Variable | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Gender: Male | 48 | 48.0 |
| Gender: Female | 52 | 52.0 |
| Age 20–30 | 57 | 57.0 |
| Age 31–40 | 31 | 31.0 |
| Age >40 | 12 | 12.0 |
| Experience <5 years | 46 | 46.0 |
| Experience 5–10 years | 38 | 38.0 |
| Experience >10 years | 16 | 16.0 |

Table 2 shows that 62% of subjects had heard of EBP, 41% shows understanding its principles. Awareness of systematic reviews had been reported by 48%. A majority (72%) certain that EBP improves patient care.

Table 2: Awareness of Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) among Participants

| EBP Awareness Item | Yes (%) | No (%) |
|------------------------------------|---------|--------|
| Heard of EBP | 62 | 38 |
| Understands EBP principles | 41 | 59 |
| Knows about systematic reviews | 48 | 52 |
| Believes EBP improves patient care | 72 | 28 |

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Table 3 showed that 35% of subjects had heard of the Cochrane Library, 18% never tried to accessed the data base. Reported hindrances were the lack of training which was in 67% and limitation in institutional access which is 58%.

Table:3 Awareness and Use of the Cochrane Library among Participants

| Cochrane Awareness Item | Yes (%) | No (%) |
|--|---------|--------|
| Heard of the Cochrane Library | 35 | 65 |
| Ever accessed Cochrane Library | 18 | 82 |
| Identifies lack of training as a barrier | 67 | 33 |
| Reports limited institutional access | 58 | 42 |

Discussion

This paper shows that there is a moderate awareness found regarding evidence based practice though the familiarity with Cochrane library is limited among the allied health care professionals in Karachi. Though more than half of the subjects knows about the concept of EBP, but the understanding of the principles is also limited while one-fifth accessed the Cochrane library. The findings clearly shows the difference between the theoretical and practical applications of resources. The results are consistent with the findings from the countries of India and Saudi Arabia where the allied health professionals showed the same limitation of practical applications due to lack of formal training and restriction of department access ^[10-11]. Similar outcomes had been noted in Nigeria, where the obstacles included high workload and limited infrastructure^[12]. In contrast, the high levels of EBP have been seen in countries of high income ^[14-15]. Despite of the gold standard source for systematic review, Cochrane use was poorly understood ^[2]. Most of the subjects identified the lack of proper training and accessibility as the main hindrance which is also found in regional studies focusing on the importance of institutional capacity-building and digital infrastructure^[16-17]. The strengths of this paper includes the target population as the AHP which is one of the underexplored populations. Limitations includes the reliance on self reported responses which may include biasness and the use of sampling method which may be reducing generalizability. Due to the design of this study, cause and effect relationship cannot be developed either. These gaps should be identified in the further future studies and longitudinal designs should be encouraged to evaluate the gap.

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Conclusion

Awareness of EBP among allied health professionals in Karachi was moderate, but knowledge and use of the Cochrane Library were limited. Key barriers included lack of training and restricted access. Addressing these through structured educational initiatives and institutional support is essential for promoting evidence-based health care delivery in Pakistan.

Author Contributions:

Ms Saira Sami verifies the full access to all of the data in the study and takes responsibility for the integrity of the data and the accuracy of the data analysis

Concept and design: Saira Sami

Acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data: Shaista Ayoob Gabol

Drafting of the manuscript: Saira Sami

Critical review of the manuscript for important intellectual content: All Authors

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