

Evidence-Based Health Care CD-ROM - a Review

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This is produced by the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) and the Health Care Libraries Unit at Oxford. Its aim is to "help people develop skills in finding and critically appraising evidence about effectiveness, in order to promote the delivery of evidence-based health care".

You purchase a CD-ROM and an accompanying workbook, which together enable you to work through a series of six fairly self-contained modules. The modules are: Introduction; Asking the question; Finding the evidence; Statistics made simple; Appraising a Randomised Controlled Trial; Appraising a review.

The package assumes no prior EBM knowledge, and only basic computer skills - mainly the use of the mouse. The interactive CD is attractively presented on screen, with clear instructions and a logical progression of ideas. The user is first helped to frame a clear question about health care, then to devise an appropriate search strategy. When 'finding the evidence', you can choose to learn about Medline searching on OVID, SilverPlatter or PubMed interfaces, and the package also teaches Cochrane searching. The critical appraisal sections contain a step-by-step worked example, and then there are a number of practice articles in the workbook, that you can work through at your leisure. Inputting your answers into the package, enables you to see where you went wrong.

I highly recommend this package. It has been well thought out and designed, with many attractive features - such as the hypertext link from any technical term to an on-line glossary, and the ability to link up to the internet. All professional health staff would benefit from completing the first three modules, and the later modules are invaluable for senior clinical staff, would-be researchers and audit staff.

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