

Towards better clinical practice: where to go for information

John Eyers provides yet another set of choice resources for clinical information



One of the main criticisms of the widespread publication of clinical guidelines in the West is that they are often entirely inappropriate for clinical practice in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), particularly when recommending expensive diagnostic tests and treatments which may not be available. The impetus for producing guidelines has largely come from the movement towards evidence-based medicine and the attempt to publicise best practice. Each systematic review, for example, published in The Cochrane Library (<http://www.thecochranelibrary.com>) has a standardised format that makes it easy to glean the essential message with authors' conclusions divided into two parts – implications for practice, and implications for research. In recent years, The Cochrane Library has devoted much more attention to addressing the 10/90 gap, where only 10% of worldwide expenditure on health research and development is devoted to the problems that primarily affect the poorest 90% of the world's population. A number of Cochrane groups, such as the Infectious Diseases Group and the Cochrane Effective Practice and Organisation of Care (EPOC) Group have consciously tried to redress this imbalance. Since then, a number of useful websites have added and enhanced information from systematic reviews, some with a particular focus on clinical practice in LMICs. These include:

Clinical Evidence (<http://clinicalevidence.bmj.com>): Published by the BMA and available as a printed handbook, online via Hinari (<http://www.who.int/hinari/en>) and in PDA format for use on smartphones. Contains best available evidence on the effects of common clinical interventions to inform clinical decision-making.

TRIP Database (<http://www.tripdatabase.com>): Produced to answer real clinical questions using the principles of evidence-based medicine, this resource is free. The TRIP editors have long been concerned with making sure it is also relevant to clinical decision-making in LMICs, and have recently incorporated a simple system of asking users to determine an article's relevance to the developing world. Users can then use this device to 'filter' broad searches to include only those considered relevant to the developing world.

As a member of HIFA2015 (<http://www.hifa2015.org/>), John Eyers believes one of the biggest challenges for improved health in less-developed countries is ensuring that equal access to appropriate and evidence-based health information is made available to all. For suggestions on topics for future articles email him on: johneyers@hotmail.com.

SumSearch2 (<http://sumsearch.org>): Searches for original studies, systematic reviews, and practice guidelines from a number of different sources. Results from PubMed (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed>), DARE (Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effectiveness (<http://www.crd.york.ac.uk/CRDWeb>), and NGC (US National Guidelines Clearinghouse (<http://www.guideline.gov>) are merged and sorted. Each search result is divided into original studies, systematic reviews and guidelines. The site also has clinical image challenges and *New England Journal of Medicine* clinical cases for CME. Available free.

WHO guidelines (<http://www.who.int/publications/guidelines/en>): A WHO committee meets once a month to select up-to-date guidelines for inclusion in the list under the following headings: Child health, Chronic diseases & disability, Environmental health, HIV/AIDS, Maternal & reproductive health, Mental health, Nutrition, Patient safety, and Tuberculosis.

Best Bets (<http://www.bestbets.org/index.php>): Developed by the Emergency Department of Manchester Royal Infirmary, UK, this site provides rapid evidence-based answers to real-life clinical questions, using a systematic approach to reviewing the literature. BETs takes into account the shortcomings of much current evidence, allowing physicians to make the best of what there is. Some of the entries have been made by physicians in less-developed countries.

PubMed Clinical Queries (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/clinical>): This part of the Pubmed database specifically limits searches to clinical research under Cochrane-defined areas: therapy, diagnosis, aetiology, prognosis, and clinical prediction guides, each of which can be selected for broad or narrow searching. Systematic reviews can also be searched for.

Finally, if your interests lie in developing clinical guidelines and standards, the following may be useful; both organisations seek partnerships globally to eliminate duplication of effort and to assist in promoting best practice.

Collaboration for Evidence-Based Health Care in Africa (<http://www.cebha.org>): A new initiative which will provide support to African authors of systematic reviews and improve the implementation of EBM in Africa.

Guidelines International Network (<http://www.g-i-n.net>): Includes an International Guideline Library.