

BRIDGING THE GAP

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Physiotherapy traditionally developed as a profession based on personal opinion, experience, observations and beliefs of practitioners and not much on scientific evidence. Professional practice is however becoming more expensive and in order to justify treatment it is imperative to provide scientific evidence to health care providers as well as to patients. In today's scenario the practicing physiotherapist must be a highly skilled clinician whose practice is supported by the available scientific evidence in their area of expertise. It is vital that the gap between the skills of clinical practice and the theory and science of clinical practice be bridged. It is no longer acceptable for clinicians to have excellent skills but limited knowledge of the scientific evidence for best practice in the same way, as it is unacceptable for teachers to have the knowledge of the latest scientific evidence but lack clinical expertise.

In addition to best research evidence and clinical expertise we also have to be aware of patient values. Professionals need to be aware of the needs and concerns of individuals as well as their expectations of each clinical encounter. These patient values should be integrated into the clinical decision-making process if an optimal result for both patient and clinician is desired.

Without the combination of these three components the professional is unable to design a meaningful protocol for effective intervention. The development and the use of protocols for treatment procedures have now become essential. It is only by using previously tested and designed protocols that the practice of physiotherapy can be challenged and developed to take up its rightful place in the rehabilitation of patients from the acute through to the chronic phases of their diseases. Without constantly testing and challenging these protocols the science of physiotherapy will not advance.

Let us respond to the year 2004 with enthusiasm and a determination to change from a focus of theory and explanation to one of tactics and clinical application and a growing ability to "transform critical appraisals of evidence into direct clinical action" (Sackett et al 2000). May the year ahead be full of joy and success in your work!

Celie Eales
(Editor)

REFERENCE

- Sackett DL, Straus SE, Richardson WS, Rosenberg W, Haynes BR 2000 Evidence - Based Medicine page 1. Churchill Livingstone, Harcourt Publishers Limited.

ELECTION OF NEW EDITORIAL BOARD AND REVIEWERS FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNAL OF PHYSIOTHERAPY

A decision has been taken by the Executive of the South African Society of Physiotherapy to re-constitute the Editorial Board and the Review Panel of the South African Journal of Physiotherapy.

We now invite all interested physiotherapists to apply for positions on either the Editorial Board or the Review Panel. You would qualify for such an appointment if you are a member of the South African Society of Physiotherapy and you have an area of special interest in physiotherapy.

Please let us have your nominations, either for yourself or a colleague, as soon as possible. Include with the nomination a C.V., contact telephone numbers and an e-mail address.

Prof. Eales wishes to thank the outgoing Editorial Board and Review Panel for their commitment and service to the journal. Your excellent input has resulted in a journal that now commands national and international respect because of its academic and intellectual status.