



Editorial Comment

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Physicians must be committed to life-long learning and to incorporating the most effective treatments into the practice of medicine. Evidence based practice helps us do just that. Evidenced-based medicine is the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the optimal care of individual patients. Care based predominantly on anecdotal evidence or because “that’s how I have done it for several years” may result in ineffective, unnecessary and even harmful care. Providers need to be familiar not only with the latest publications in their area of expertise but should also be able to judge the quality and validity of the data being presented. This is becoming increasingly difficult if not impossible because of the expanding volume of medical knowledge.

A way to uncomplicated the use of evidence is to become familiar with where the most reliable evidence exists. Medical databases such as MEDLINE, PubMed, and the Cochrane Collaboration are such tools. These search engines provide easy access to the peer reviewed publications in health care. Other sources of good quality information include approved CME courses and publications sponsored by the medical specialties professional organizations.

We all need to stay current because our patients expect this but they too are accessing more medical information using the internet. It is not uncommon to spend several minutes of a scheduled visit explaining a condition and, in some cases correcting misinformation obtained through by the internet. While it is good for patients to learn about their conditions and to be active partners in developing a plan of care, it is also critical practitioners help them understand their conditions by knowing and shar-

ing the most current and valid evidence possible.

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