

Creating Practice-based Evidence:

A Guide for SLTs

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This book aims to provide a practical guide for SLTs interested in developing their skills in creating practice based evidence within the course of their clinical work.

There is an increasing emphasis on being able to demonstrate that what we do works, that it is evidence based and cost effective. However within a clinical role it can sometimes be difficult to translate research into practice when current practice, constraints of time and resources and models of service provision influence how services are delivered and developed. In addition, within SLT the level of research evidence is often indicative or moderate rather than strong (www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/whatworks). This in turn can make it difficult to decide whether a new approach should be adopted in favour of another without embarking on further evaluation or research. The authors highlight that clinicians are ideally placed, and actively encouraged by the RCSLT research strategy, to generate relevant research questions and to add to the evidence base.

The book defines practice based evidence as 'gathering evidence during the course of everyday clinical activity...generating a question that is based on a concern, query or hunch about your current way of working and approaching that question methodically in order to answer it as best you can within the resources available to you.'

The book is well set out and is organized into 3 parts and 11 chapters. Each chapter is written by a different contributing author(s) all of whom have experience of both clinical practice and research. Each chapter includes stated learning outcomes, references and suggested further reading or resources. The book can be read cover to cover or relevant chapters and sections can be selected according to need (particularly within part 2).

Part 1 focuses on 'Getting started' and includes an overview of practice based evidence, current drivers for this and how it is supported within the NHS. The focus of the book is primarily on getting clinicians started with evidence gathering and therefore focuses mainly on small scale research. The authors note that evidence can include audit and service evaluation as well as research and a definition of each is provided which can be important for establishing which approvals are required. Information about frameworks for clinical outcome research is included and the importance of small scale research within this is highlighted i.e. at the beginning of an evaluation of a new intervention, to support and develop research skills and to drive future larger scale projects.

Chapter 2 guides the reader through the process of developing and refining a research question, planning a methodology, managing data and developing a research protocol to guide the project.

Chapter 3 provides very practical advice to help a project run smoothly such as making 'motivational mates', seeking support from your manager, R & D department and local University, and how to set up a research journal and GANTT chart to plan and record your progress.

Part 2 is 'how to turn clinical questions into research' and includes 5 chapters each focusing

on a different clinical question e.g. 'Does my intervention make a difference to my client's impairment?' and 'We are doing some training. What are the benefits?' Each chapter uses a similar framework to consider a range of issues. A number of themes run through the book including the importance of refining your question, thorough planning, ethical approval, literature searching and Public and Patient Involvement. These frameworks and themes give the reader a feeling of consistency and highlight key issues for the reader to consider. A key message of the book is that it is important that any project embarked upon is carefully and thoroughly planned. This book provides useful, practical advice and tools to equip the reader to do so.

The final section includes practical information for 'Sharing your findings' and encourages the reader to consider the most appropriate medium to report and disseminate findings. Practical tips on how to plan and prepare for this are also included. Chapter 10 covers information and advice for SLTs interested in pursuing a research degree or applying for funding for a clinical research project.

This is a very useful and encouraging book for any SLT considering creating practice based evidence and would be a valuable addition to any SLT department. It is aimed primarily at getting SLTs started with evidence gathering but may also be a useful and reassuring source of information and advice for practicing SLTs who already have research experience. It is easy to read and provides comprehensive practical advice to plan and carry out a relevant, scientifically robust small scale research or evaluation project within a clinical role.

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