

# Evidence Based Practice in Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation: Easy, Pragmatic or Nonsense?

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The use of evidence to guide clinicians' practice, known as Evidence Based Practice or EBP, has been an increasing area of interest worldwide. Its concepts started in medicine, the initial term was Evidence Based Medicine or EBM [1] and eventually, the concepts were adopted and used by other health professions wanting to provide the best management to achieve optimum outcomes for patients and clients, therefore the term EBP was coined [2].

Sports medicine and rehabilitation is one area where the application of EBP is most valuable. It covers the prevention, evaluation, management and rehabilitation of injuries brought about by participation in athletic and sports activities. Given this broad area of practice, it is very important that the best evidence is used to make informed decisions regarding client management.

There are issues however, in the use and application of the best evidence in making decisions regarding client management. Quite a large number of systematic reviews and randomized controlled trials have been done to provide evidence on what works best in the field of sports medicine and rehabilitation. Lack of access to access the evidence and lack of applied and relevant evidence for very specific cases are major barriers to busy sports medicine professionals [3]. Given these constraints, applying the concepts of EBP becomes challenging. However, is the use of EBP in sports medicine and rehabilitation really difficult and challenging? If it is, how can it be made easier and pragmatic for sports medicine professionals?

We recognize that sports medicine and rehabilitation is a widely researched area and that there is a large volume of published studies that provide us with the evidence. However, most of these can be accessed in databases where a subscription is required to log on and access the full version of the article. This has limited the access to the evidence. More recently, open access journals and databases have increased in number to address this concern. Open access facilities allow anyone to access the research, anywhere and anytime. Easy access to the research evidence facilitates the use and dissemination of research findings to all possible end users and stakeholders. One of the open access publications is the OMICS Publishing Group (<http://www.omicsonline.org/>) [4]. The OMICS publishing group has a list of several journals in different areas and one specifically related to sports

medicine and rehabilitation is the Journal of Sports Medicine and Doping Studies.

(<http://omicsonline.org/jsmdshome.php>) [5]. Open access to this journal will allow more research findings to be easily seen and used by sports medicine professionals in practice.

With access to the evidence made easier with the increase in open access journals, the next concern is the relevance and applicability of the evidence to a client specific scenario. There is variability in every country, setting and client concerns. The evidence may not always reflect exactly the same scenario experienced by the sports professional. So what does the sports professional do? The key answer is to localise the decision based from what the evidence presents [6]. Whatever case or condition the sports professionals encounter, they will have to decide on how to apply the evidence and this will require them to use their expertise. They may need to consider the local setting, the available resources, and their skills in relation to the clients' goal. In so doing, the real concept of EBP is used and applied.

Evidence based practice is essential in sports medicine and rehabilitation as it is in any other health area. Applying EBP can be made easier by open access journal facilities and then localising the evidence to a client scenario. Sports medicine professionals just need to be engaged and active in applying EBP in their context of practice to realise that yes, EBP is easy and pragmatic for sports medicine and rehabilitation.

## References

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