

Interdisciplinary Collaboration to Advance Evidence-Based Behavioral Practice

Kristin Hitchcock, M.S.I.¹, Ross Brownson, Ph.D.², Edward Mullen, Ph.D.³, Robin Newhouse, Ph.D.⁴, Jason Satterfield, Ph.D.⁵, Bonnie Spring, Ph.D.¹, Barbara Walker, Ph.D.⁶, Evelyn Whitlock, M.D.⁷

¹ Department of Preventive Medicine, Northwestern University; ² School of Public Health, St. Louis University; ³ School of Social Work, Columbia University; ⁴ School of Nursing, University of Maryland; ⁵ School of Medicine, University of California San Francisco; ⁶ Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences, Indiana University; ⁷ Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research & Oregon Evidence-Based Practice Center; Authors are members of the Council for Training in Evidence-Based Behavioral Practice.

Background

Evidence-Based Practice: A Core Competency

The Institute of Medicine acknowledges the role of evidence-based practice in improving health care systems and has identified it as a core competency for health professionals in the 21st century (*Crossing the Quality Chasm*, 2001; *Health Professions Education: A Bridge to Quality*, 2003).

Preconditions are established for professionals in the health and social sciences to acquire a shared vocabulary and conceptual foundation that will facilitate collaboration in transdisciplinary research and practice.

Challenges in Behavioral Health

The implementation of effective behavioral interventions holds the potential to improve public health and lower health care costs. The field of behavioral health draws individuals from several academic disciplines and professions:



Fig. 1. Professions engaged in behavioral health research & practice.

Behavioral scientists and practitioners in these professions all come from different training backgrounds and as a result, their vocabulary, conceptual frameworks, and research methods often differ greatly. To access, critically appraise, and iteratively apply the evidence generated by each discipline requires a common base of training and tools for knowledge acquisition and translation.

EBBP Project

Beginnings

In 2006, the National Institute of Health's Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research funded a contract (N01-LM-6-3512) to develop *Resources for Training in Evidence-Based Behavioral Practice (EBBP)*.

Goals

- Develop a common language and skill set to enhance communication among the major health disciplines
- Disseminate information about concepts, methods, and tools used in evidence-based practice
- Provide educators with tools for teaching evidence-based concepts and skills to students, practitioners and researchers.
- Foster translational and practice-based research
- Help interventionists acquire skills to perform evidence-based behavioral interventions and ongoing outcome assessments

White Paper: Definition & Competencies for EBBP

Development

To guide the development of training materials, the EBBP Council prepared an analysis of competencies needed to engage in the process of evidence-based behavioral practice. Competencies are organized by the five steps of EBBP



Fig 2. Steps of the EBBP process, from white paper.

A draft white paper was completed in 2007 and distributed to affiliated organizations and others for comment. The paper was revised with their feedback and a new version posted to the website (<http://www.ebbp.org>) in March 2008. The white paper is expected to be a living document, periodically revised with input from relevant individuals and groups.

EBBP Council

The goals and objectives of the contract are being accomplished by a Council for Training in Evidence-Based Behavioral Practice (EBBP Council). The EBBP Council is comprised of representatives from medicine, nursing, psychology, public health, social work, and library science.

The EBBP Council receives guidance from a Scientific Advisory Board, which ensures that the project goals and deliverables meet the needs of each constituent group.

Affiliated Organizations

The EBBP Council has invited professional societies and other organizations to affiliate with the EBBP project. Affiliated organizations (23 to date) have an interest in advancing a multidisciplinary, evidence-based approach to behavioral health practice. Organization liaisons convey feedback and requests for resource development to the EBBP Council.

Fig. 3. Conceptual model of EBBP, from white paper.



The Revised White Paper

- Presents an interdisciplinary, inter-professional model of evidence-based practice
- Is compatible with an ecological framework *
- Builds on a foundation of professionalism
- Emphasizes collaborative decision-making

Additionally, the EBBP Council recognizes that the EBBP process is often most feasible and efficient within the interdisciplinary and inter-professional health care team, where the knowledge and skills of individual members creates a synergy of practice.

* Intervening solely on the behavior of individuals often is not sufficient to sustain long-term behavior change. Ideally, interventions need to be directed at changing influences at the individual, organizational, community, and public policy levels. (Breslow, Am J Health Promot, 1996;10:253-7; McLeroy et al. Health Educ Q. 1988;5:351-77; Stokols, Am J Health Promot, 1996;10:282-98.)

EBBP.org

The project website, online at <http://www.ebbp.org>, provides:

- Information about the project
- Access to the Definition & Competencies white paper
- Links to evidence-based practice resources for behavioral health practitioners
- A platform to deliver future web-based training modules



Fig. 4. Homepage of EBBP.org

Opportunities for Librarians

There is a great need for additional infrastructure for evidence-based practice in behavioral health, which is complicated by the diversity of research and practice traditions in the various behavioral health professions. This context presents new opportunities for librarians.

Librarians can explore new opportunities for teaching and collaboration, especially with health psychologists. For many psychologists, evidence-based practice (as a *process*) is a new concept.

Librarians can also play an important role in bridging behavioral health disciplines/professions through:

- Education regarding diversity of available research
- Instruction in use of relevant resources across disciplines
- Improved access to training and resources for practitioners
- Expert searching for behavioral health systematic reviews