

Evidence-based Child Health Care

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Evidence-based Child Health Care

Challenges for Practice

Edited by

Edward Alan Glasper and Lorraine Ireland





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Foreword

I was very pleased indeed to be asked to prepare a foreword for this absorbing new text for child health care professionals. The book has an interesting history as it was inspired by the First International Evidence-based Child Health Nursing Conference which took place in Jersey in 1998. It is, therefore, a good example of the efficient dissemination of evidence in support of effective practice. Child health care professionals often feel that it is very difficult to make their voice heard. We are part of a numerically small group within the health care system, and children's services represent a small part of the totality of the health services. Indeed, it has taken time and a good deal of hard work for us to achieve a position where children's issues are prominent on the agendas of public policy at all. This book allows our voice to be heard loud and clear.

As an edited text, there is, although the editors have done a careful job of unifying the text, a freshness about the differences in style between the various writers. Each chapter has its distinctive character. It is particularly significant to point out that the contributors come from a very wide range of backgrounds in clinical practice, management, research and education in the child health arena. The chapters certainly contain their theoretical perspectives, but the overall tenor is that of the viewpoint of the doer; real practical experience in dealing with the everyday practical challenges of child health care shines through in each of the chapters of this book.

This text offers us the opportunity to learn a good deal from the work and experience of our colleagues that it presents. With that learning, we are also challenged to take the same journey as the contributors: to expose to systematic examination issues that intrigue and interest us in our day-to-day professional work, and to inform our colleagues about the results of that examination. The sheer range of the topics tackled by the contributors is particularly impressive, but the emphasis is always firmly placed on the welfare of children using the health services and their families. The importance of the family for the child in the health services, the subject of so many of the chapters in this book, emerges clearly as a topic upon which child health care professionals are placing great store. This underscores an important and constructive development in our professions towards family-centred care. The voice of the health

services user – the child and the family – is, to a satisfying degree, prominent throughout the book.

The growing body of specific child health professional knowledge based on valid and reliable research strengthens the credibility of the child health care professions in the eyes of other professional colleagues. This in turn enhances our confidence in engaging in the important developmental debates at all levels of health care. This book, therefore, marks our continually improved standing in professional and scholarly communities.

All these are important issues, but they must not detract from the essential point that this is a lively, stimulating and highly readable book. Child health care practitioners – from students to qualified and experienced practitioners – will all find something to inform them and inspire them in this text.

This book signals the growing maturity and professionalisation of the child health care services as it admirably demonstrates the growing evidence basis of our professions.

JIM RICHARDSON
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Preface

The UK National Health Service's drive towards clinical governance has added impetus to the pursuit of evidence-based practice. The nursing profession is at the sharp end of practice and is now mandated to deliver care based on best evidence. The audit cycle built into the criteria of clinical governance will make this a high priority on the agenda of all nurses. Children's nurses are no exception to this and their philosophy of 'the child first and always' will ensure that their evidence base for practice is commensurate with this stance.

This text aims to give readers exemplars of clinically focused research that questions existing care paradigms and makes suggestions on how research findings can be incorporated into clinical practice. In addition, all aspects of the process of delivering evidence-based care are highlighted, from initial thoughts through to implementation, from educational input to research output. The individual contributors to this book, although differing in their position and approach, have one thing in common – their excellence in care for children and their families.

The development of a global network of institutions linked through the World Wide Web, all committed to collating precise accounts of research using the process of systematic review, is a modern feature of health care. As children's nursing moves forward into the early years of the third millennium, it will need to develop the skills not only of conducting research with children and their families, but also of interpreting the work of others and how it might apply in the real world of clinical practice. This process will be helped when all practising nurses have access to the technology that harnesses the latent power of the telecommunication industry.

Soon every ward or environment where patients are cared for will have ready access to the World Wide Web. Busy practitioners, however, want easily digestible accounts and 'bottom-line' approaches to evidence-based care. They do not have the time or indeed the inclination to wade through tomes of heavy text in their search for solutions to their problems. *Evidence-based Child Health Care* attempts to provide an easily readable and focused account of contemporary child health research and its application to clinical practice.

In this first UK evidence-based textbook for children's nurses, the editors have endeavoured to include a range of chapters, each of which addresses different issues in contemporary children's nursing practice. Clearly, no textbook can encompass the full range of research activity in which children's nurses are currently involved, but the chapters do reflect the repertoire of contemporary issues that currently affect care. It must be stressed that the quest for evidence-based nursing care must be on the basis of partnership and multi-disciplinary collaboration. Children's nurses do not practise in a professional vacuum, and the introduction of a philosophy of clinical governance, which is designed to implement the very highest standards of care, is based on a framework in which all health care professionals can work together as a team to bring about positive change.

Within the context of health care in the UK, a number of institutions have been developed to augment and make easier the inherent difficulties of accessing research findings and, importantly, the sources of best evidence. The National Institute of Clinical Excellence and the NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, within the University of York, both have sophisticated web sites whose remit is to provide carers with the information they need to incorporate research-based evidence into their practice.

Quality care is dependent on best evidence, and children's nurses must learn to reconcile the inherent tensions that are always present in the work environment. In a health care world where there are perennial shortages of children's nurses, coupled with earlier discharge, more acute care and a growth in ambulatory and primary health care for children, it is not difficult to appreciate the dilemmas facing the practitioner. In recognition of these difficulties, this 'evidence-based child health care' text is designed for all children's nurses who wish to be inspired by the work of their peers. The incorporation of a strong research strand within the diploma and undergraduate child branch curricula makes this text timely.

Contemporary accounts by journalists in British newspapers, suggesting that today's nurses are somehow too educated to care properly for patients, will be revealed by the readers of this textbook to be false. The chapters included in this text are a celebration of contemporary child health care and its enduring mission to provide excellence in care for the children and families with whom the nurses work.

In Chapter 1, the authors attempt to examine the issues facing children's nurses in their quest to deliver evidence-based care. In particular, the potential ethical pitfalls of conducting research with children and their families are discussed. Chapter 2 examines the

inherent problems of providing the evidence upon which clinical nursing practice is based. The assessment of practice must now include evidence from a range of sources, and within educational programmes for children's nurses, the emphasis on assessing practice is just as crucial as that on assessing theory. Similarly, Chapter 3 investigates the legacy of an undergraduate educational programme for children's nurses and seeks to examine the influence of the research component of the course and its ongoing impact on care delivery.

Chapters 5 and 6 take one of children's nursing icons of care, that is, parental participation in care, and subject it to constructive conceptual analysis. In Chapter 5, the authors review the research evidence that underpins parental participation in care, using the principles and procedures of systematic review. Chapter 6 examines care from the perspective of a parent and reveals that the psychosocial elements of care are often inconsistent.

Chapter 7 valuably addresses the issue of taking the views of children and young people seriously. The study discussed in this chapter adds to the growing body of evidence that children should be involved in decisions about their own treatment and, just as importantly, involved in the planning and development of child health and welfare services.

Chapter 8 reflects the concerns that children's nurses have related to childhood accidents, the study describes the identification of target groups and priorities for accident prevention. In suggesting strategies for nurses to become involved in childhood accident prevention work, the study emphasises the important role that nurses can adopt in the best use of evidence and its relevance to care practice.

Chapter 9 investigates how children perceive their own internal anatomy; the study on which the chapter is based highlights the importance of communicating information accurately to children.

In Chapter 10, the author also examines the necessity of ensuring good communication between families and health care professionals. This study investigates the use of parent information leaflets and how effective they are in helping parents to prepare their children for hospital admission.

Chapters 11 and 12 examine the sexual health needs of young people. In Chapter 11, the author explores the development of young people's sexual health through interviews with a sample of young student nurses. In Chapter 12, the authors report on an innovative study related to service provision to secondary schools. Both studies highlight the continuing need for effective health education for young people.

Chapter 13 is related to the growth and increasing recognition of paediatric intensive care provision for children. The chapter details the pilot work of a prospective large-scale study that aims to identify the facilities available for critically ill children and ascertain outcomes using a range of scoring tools and other measures. The authors believe the information generated through this study will form a rational basis on which to provide the most effective service for critically ill children.

Chapter 14 describes a study in which the author attempts to ascertain whether some children are more popular as patients than others. Factors associated with being unpopular are discussed, as is the importance of children's nurses recognising their own value and belief systems.

Chapter 15 reports on an investigative study undertaken to audit how children's nurses manage fever in hospital, with particular reference to the administration of antipyretics. An evaluation of a specially designed fever chart and a survey of children's nurses from ten units reveals that fever management is based on tradition rather than evidence, thus highlighting the problems of practising nurses accessing the information they need in order to care appropriately.

In Chapter 16, the author emphasises the importance of a multi-disciplinary team approach in the management of children with diabetes. The study reports the evaluation of a paediatric diabetes specialist nurse position and demonstrates positive outcomes for the children concerned.

Chapters 17, 18 and 19 adopt a community perspective on evidence-based care for children, examining in particular the interface between hospital and home. Given the emphasis on developing paediatric community services, these chapters help to illuminate some of the difficulties facing the parents of sick children in the home environment.

Chapter 20 explores the evidence related to chronic childhood pain. This study discusses the experiences of families when living with children with chronic pain and recommends strategies that professionals might use when caring for similar children.

Chapter 21 is a fitting conclusion to the text in that it provides a detailed analysis of the process of collaborative approaches to evidence-based child health nursing practice. Readers should be able to emulate the process in their own clinical environments.

The primary goal of this text is to challenge children's nurses to understand, appreciate and use best evidence when planning the care of individual children and their families. The chapters contained

therein utilise a variety of research, methods, some quantitative and some qualitative, all, however, following the same mission.

We hope you enjoy using this text and find it valuable in your day-to-day work.

The painting on the front cover, 'The Doctor' by Fildes, graphically shows the futility of working in an environment in which the evidence base for care is unknown. Child health care professionals in the nineteenth century had little access to evidence on which to base practice. In this the dawn of the twenty-first century we are surrounded by evidence but we must learn to harness it for the benefit of the children and families we care for.

ALAN GLASPER
LORRAINE IRELAND