

Evidence-based Health Promotion: Applying it in Practice

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Abstract

Introduction: In health promotion, we should use interventions established by evidence to be effective in improving the health of the community. This paper reviews the concepts, evaluation and use of evidence in health promotion. **Methods:** A literature search of evidence-based health promotion and evaluation of health promotion was conducted using Medline, Social Science Citation Index (SSCI), PsycLIT and evidence-based web sites on health promotion, health education and community preventive services. Recent issues of key journals on health promotion, health education and public health were also hand-searched. **Results:** The concept of evidence in health promotion interventions is complex due to its multidimensional nature. Evidence of effectiveness in health promotion is assessed by combining quantitative data on effect change in outcome measures and qualitative data on process evaluation of health promotion activities. Limitations to the use of randomised trials in community-based health promotion interventions include ethical and logistic problems in maintaining randomisation of subjects over long periods, absence of experimental conditions in the real-world setting, contamination of control subjects and the multidimensional nature of health promotion interventions. **Conclusion:** Randomised controlled trials should be used to evaluate the effectiveness of most health education and behavioural interventions in clinical settings. When such trials are not feasible as in community-based health promotion interventions, quasi-experimental designs provide strong evidence. Multiple methods are needed to assess evidence of effectiveness of health promotion programmes. Appropriate practice of evidence-based health promotion requires consideration of quality of available evidence, local values and prevailing resources.

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Key words: Evaluate, Health promotion effectiveness, Qualitative data, Randomised controlled trials

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