

What's the Evidence for Evidence-based Practice?

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- Evidence-based practice versus what?
- What counts as evidence? Is research the only legitimate source? Could it ever be sole supplier?
- Evidence is always for or against some proposed answer to a question, it does not exist independently of the questions we address.

- On its own, research cannot tell us ‘what works’
- There is no single hierarchy in terms of which any method can serve as a gold standard.
- Methodology involves trade-offs among different threats to validity.

- Research and research reviews cannot ever be fully transparent, nor is it desirable that we should try to make them so.
- Any form of professional practice cannot but rely upon tacit knowledge and judgment
- And the task of relating research evidence to evidence from other sources is a complex and difficult one.

- Even policymaking is a form of practice in this sense, it too must rely upon other sources of evidence than research, and on judgment.
- And the relationship between research evidence and conclusions about what are and are not desirable policies is not a direct one.

- Finally, we need to view the evidence-based practice model in the current political context, in particular in terms of its association with what has come to be called the ‘new public management’.
- In my view this form of management involves an exaggerated conception of the role that policy can play in relation to professional practice, and has had damaging effects on professionalism in several fields.