

EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE: IMPLEMENTING EVIDENCE: RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE AS AN EXAMPLE (CNIN NOVEMBER 2009)

Imagine if everything we had learned from clinical trials and research studies was being practised in our hospitals, community health services and aged care facilities. Would things be different?

Many studies suggest that there are gaps between evidence and practice and that these gaps can affect safety, quality and outcomes. Increasingly there is a focus on finding out how we can most effectively translate what we have learned into what we do. This is a complex area of study looking at changing individual and organisational behaviour and maintaining that change.

Having good evidence is the first step in being able to look at implementing best practice. This enables organisations to identify gaps between what they do and what the evidence suggests should be done. For example, the Australian Government funded the first ever [guidelines for a palliative approach in residential aged care](#). Residential aged care facilities can use these guidelines to see if they are providing best practice care. They could carry out an audit on a specific measure such as pain assessment or determine the number of residents with an advance care plan. For example, a recent study by [Paroz and Santos-Eggimann \(2009\)](#) used a death census to determine if palliative care approaches were being taken up in long-term care.

If weaknesses were identified by an organisation, they could develop a plan to introduce changes. For instance, in Australia, a project group within the National Ageing Research Institute has been looking at an effective and sustainable [implementation strategy](#) for pain assessment and management in the residential aged care setting.

The final step in implementing evidence is to check that the intended change has occurred. When looking for measures to show changes, it can be useful to identify what data is collected as part of normal practices. This can make data collection easier and more meaningful. One example of an implementation evaluation is the UK study by [Badger et al \(2009\)](#) which measured the effect of introducing the Gold Standards Framework into nursing homes.

Identifying evidence – practice gaps, developing an implementation activity and measuring effects are the basic steps in methodically looking to moving evidence into practice.

Finding out more

[Reducing evidence-practice gaps](#)

[Identifying Barriers to Evidence Uptake](#) (National Institute of Clinical Studies)

CareSearch is an online resource funded by the Department of Health and Ageing to help clinicians and consumers find relevant evidence about palliative care. Available now at www.caresearch.com.au

