



### **Evidence-based Medicine: How to Practice and Teach EBM**

David L. Sackett, W. Scott Richardson, William Rosenberg, R. Brian Haynes. 250 pp. Churchill Livingstone, New York. 1997. ISBN 0-443-05686-2

**Overall rating:** Excellent  
**Strengths:** Clear, conversational style; simple explanations.  
**Weaknesses:** None  
**Audience:** Practitioners at any stage, including clinical clerks

This book is excellent in explaining the philosophy of evidence-based medicine (EBM) and demonstrating its application. Written for busy practitioners who want to learn and teach EBM, it is the culmination of more than 3 decades of research into the field of clinical judgement and decision-making. Much of the work was done by the authors and their colleagues in the Evidence-based Working Group at McMaster University Health Sciences Centre, Hamilton, Ont.

Following an interesting introduction on the need for EBM are 5 how-to sections: asking clinical questions you can answer; searching for the best evidence; appraising the evidence; determining if you can apply valid and important evidence in the care of your patient; and evaluating your progress. Each chapter can be read in a single sitting. Concepts are simply explained, with real-life clinical examples. There are helpful tables, icons for easy searches, and the editing is flawless.

The philosophy of EBM offers some apparent advantages. These include an emphasis on learning about your patient's problems, a ruthless method for managing the vast medical literature, making hidden assumptions explicit and a gut feeling that this is a

clinical method of merit. Moreover, it levels the playing field between teacher and learner or generalists and subspecialists; an authoritative or hierarchical approach has little status.

With its many thoughtful aids to learning the book is likely to be an indispensable resource in office and bedside practice, as well as in post-graduate training programs, particularly those in the generalist specialties. EBM could even be useful in explaining therapy or diagnosis to patients who propose alternative approaches. If I had any reservation it would be whether I would ever have the expertise and the time to implement this philosophy fully in my own practice and teaching.

**G. Ross Langley, MD**  
Department of Medicine  
Dalhousie University and  
Queen Elizabeth II  
Health Sciences Centre  
Halifax, NS

### **The Medical Management of AIDS in Women**

Edited by Deborah Cotton, D. Heather Watts. 466 pp. Illust. Wiley-Liss, New York. 1997. Distributed in Canada by the CMA. \$121.95 (\$103.95, members). ISBN 0-471-07674-0

**Overall rating:** Good  
**Strengths:** Excellent coverage of gynecologic and obstetric aspects of HIV/AIDS; good sections on STDs and drug abuse  
**Weaknesses:** Little on psychosocial or psychiatric aspects  
**Audience:** Physicians who care for patients with HIV/AIDS

There is much of importance here from editors Deborah Cotton, who is with the Infectious Disease Unit of the Massachusetts General Hospital, and Heather

Watts, who is with the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, University of Washington. The book covers the biology, immunology, clinical manifestations and treatment of HIV disease and its complications. The sections on obstetrics and gynecology and the one on STDs are particularly good.

A more specific focus on the manifestations and complications of HIV relevant to women and on the differences between infection in men and in women would have been useful. Sections on general aspects of HIV infection could be abbreviated.

There are some unfortunate omissions, the most prominent of which is the lack of a section on the psychosocial aspects of HIV infection. It would have been useful to expand on the socioeconomic aspects, the high level of domestic abuse associated with HIV infection and the relative power position of women in both prevention and management. Also, there is no section dealing with psychiatric illness, which, in my experience, is a major issue with many patients. The section on primary care management of patients with HIV does not mention any of these problems and delivers what is essentially the "biomedical model" eschewed by the editors in their preface. These deficiencies are in part mitigated by an excellent section on management of drug abuse in HIV-infected women, which is a major emerging problem.

The style is fairly uniform and quite readable. Information and references are as up to date as is reasonable in a rapidly moving field. The book contains essential knowledge, but is rather expensive. A number of studies on treatment of HIV in women are under way. This text could be shortened and, therefore, the price much reduced, by omitting most of the material that is available in general text-