Evidence-based Practice in Hong Kong: Challenges and Promise

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1. Definition and History of EBP
2. Why EBP?
3. Barriers of EBP implementation
4. EBP Dissemination Strategies
5. EBP in local contexts
6. Proposal for a pilot EBP project
What is Evidence-Based Practice (EBP)?

- **Dual-Meaning**

- A specific program or intervention
  - Interventions or techniques with some degree of research support
    - Evidence-Based Intervention or Empirically-supported Intervention

- A process
  - Process for making practice decisions in which practitioners integrate research evidence with clinical expertise and client values
5As of EBP process

**ASK** important and answerable questions about the care of clients.

**ACQUIRE** the best available research evidence to answer the question.

**APPRaise** the quality of research evidence, and potential relevance to your client.

**APPLY** the evidence to practice decisions, based on client values/preference, and clinical expertise.

**Analyze** outcomes.
What is Evidence-Based Practice (EBP)?

- Paradigm placing emphasis on use of research (scientific) evidence
History of EBP

- EBP originated in medicine in 1990’s
  - Evidence-based medicine (EBM)

- EBM has been transferred into other disciplines, including social work, in late 90’s
  - Revolution OR Evolution?
    - In 70-80’s, crisis of effectiveness of social work intervention
    - Empirical Clinical Practice (ECP) movement

- EBP is now the goal of social service sectors in many developed countries (The NASW Code of Ethics)
  - The adoption of EBP has been facilitated by increases in practice research, technological development (internet), and increased awareness on accountability.
Why EBP?

- EBP takes appropriate actions GUIDED by evidence
  - EBP helps us avoid decisions based solely on belief, opinion, and past experience that was not subjected to systematic and scientific test
  - EBP moves helping professionals away from authoritarian practices

- EBP helps social service professionals adopt LIFELONG learning
  - Fosters skills to find, evaluate, and implement scientific evidence

- EBP places clients’ benefits FIRST

- Arguably, EBP represents the most sophisticated model to date that has been developed to guide our practice and improve the services we provide.
Barriers to EBP implementation  Gray et al. (2012)

- **Inadequate agency resources**
  - Lack of Time
  - Limited access to or funding for research

- **Skills and knowledge needs of human service professionals**
  - Inadequate skills, knowledge, training, or understanding of EBP
    - Social Work Education in universities
    - Lack of ongoing professional development and training

- **Agency culture**
  - Lack of critical questioning
  - No prior experience in utilizing research to inform practice
  - Overly bureaucratic management or administrative procedures

- **Insufficient research evidence in some areas**

- **Practitioner attitudes**
  - Suspicion about EBP itself, and the trustworthiness of research and the applicability of EBP to a human service context
  - Preference for more experiential forms of knowledge
Strategies to overcome the barriers

- Multifaceted approaches are required.

- For individual practitioners, EBP dissemination strategies have focused on “how best to organize and disseminate new information from research findings to manageable, practitioner-friendly summaries”

- One response was
promotes positive social and economic change through the production and use of systematic reviews and other evidence synthesis for evidence-based policy and practice
Welcome to the CEBC:
California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare

The mission of the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (CEBC) is to advance the effective implementation of evidence-based practices for children and families involved with the child welfare system.

- Searchable database of child welfare related programs.
- Guidance on how to make critical decisions regarding selecting and implementing programs.
EBP in local contexts

- **Code of Practice (SWRB)**

- **Supervision and Training**
  - 24. Social workers, who provide supervision or professional consultation, should possess and maintain necessary knowledge, skills and methodology through appropriate education, training, consultation and research to facilitate them to perform the tasks in professional supervision and training competently. Social workers should provide training or instructions only within their areas of knowledge or competence.

- **Competence**
  - 42. When generally recognised standards do not exist with respect to an emerging area of practice, social workers should exercise careful judgment and take responsible steps, including appropriate education, research, training, professional consultation, and supervision, to ensure the competence in their work and to protect clients from harm.
Challenges in local contexts

- Shek et al., 2004
- EBP has been implemented minimally, although it is gaining more recognition.
  - Why? Or Why not?
- Barriers
  - Barriers in the Chinese cultural context
    - Lack of a critical culture within social service profession; concerned more about the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of doing rather than the ‘why’
  - Lack of motivation or incentive
    - With regard to salary rise or promotion, it does not really matter whether the service is evidence-based.
  - Lack of education on EBP
  - Practical barriers
    - Lack of resources (access to online databases)
    - Shortage of indigenous research
A pilot research project

- **Objectives:**
  - To understand HK social workers perception of and attitude toward EBP
  - To validate EBP attitude scales in HK contexts

- **Methods:**
  - **Anonymous Online Survey**
    - Will take just 10-15 minutes to complete
    - Will NOT collect information that can be used to identify the respondents and the agencies of the respondents (with research ethics approval from CUHK)
Long-Term Agenda

Pilot Study
on HK social workers’ perception of and attitude toward EBP

Empirical Research
on barriers (or facilitators) of EBP implementation among HK social workers

Development
of strategies/programs/policies designed to encourage HK social workers to adopt EBP

Evaluation
of the dissemination strategies/programs/policies
Thank you!

- We are currently recruiting the survey participants for the pilot study
- *We will start where the practitioner is!*
- If you are interested, please contact

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