
medicine and its major subspecialties (cardiology, respirology, gastroenterology, nephrology, hematology, endocrinology, neurology, etc), and mental health. Additional topics will be added as resources permit. The services will be delivered via e-mail and a web-based, customizable portal to the NOVL digital library.

For further information, watch the McMaster PLUS website: <http://hiru.mcmaster.ca/PLUS>.

PRACTICE-BASED EVIDENCE INITIATIVE – ALBERTA

Robert Hayward and Louisa Fricker

Most physicians would like to incorporate more evidence-based medicine into their practices, but knowing where to look, what to trust, or how to connect evidence with practice can seem onerous. The Centre for Health Evidence (CHE), is easing the way with a combination of hands-on workshops, "webinars", a train-the-trainer programme and online access to "state-of-the-evidence" Internet Desktops.

Alberta Health and Wellness and the Alberta Medical Association have established a Physician Office Systems Program (POSP) to transition physician offices in Alberta to electronic information systems. POSP has already enrolled over 2000 physicians and expects to get the majority of physicians connected within the next 2 years. Already most participating physicians have installed electronic medical records, scheduling and billing systems and links into new province-wide pharmacy and test-result databases. In addition, all participants must commit to access and use knowledge-based information tools to facilitate improved decision-making. The Centre for Health Evidence (CHE) has been engaged to work with POSP to put in place change-management programmes that will help physicians identify the best sources of evidence and to incorporate these into their daily care.

The CHE has assembled a group of physician "opinion-leaders" in evidence-based practice who are also members of communities throughout the province. These are brought together in a "virtual learning community" through a private online Internet environment where they participate in a "train-the-trainer" curriculum, and access a full suite of training materials and EBM resources. The curriculum is largely

based on the Users' Guides Interactive, Teacher version.

With POSP support, 3 levels of hands-on training workshops are offered to Alberta physicians. These go beyond theory to demonstrate a practice-based approach to managing knowledge in the information age. Given the right skills and tools, decisions can be blended with clinical expertise, patient values, and the best available evidence.

During and after the workshops, participants use an electronic learning environment customized for POSP by the CHE. The POSP "Practice-Based Evidence Desktop" (POSPPBE) is a single-sign-on, single point-of-access for workshop presentations, surveys, tutorials, interactive cases, activities, information resources, professional development, and peer-to-peer support. This remains available to participants after the workshops to help them communicate with POSP peers, connect with facilitators and support staff, and have easy access to the best decision-support tools for their practice. Workshop participants also receive a copy of the Users' Guides to the Medical Literature: Essentials of Evidence-Based Clinical Practice and access to the full Users' Guides Interactive (Learner version) through their online learning community. In 2003, the CHE introduces "Webinars" that allow busy clinicians to work through the EBM curriculum in a series of 1 hour mini-workshops broadcast over the Internet. Participants sign on to a website that allows them to see live presentations and demonstrations. They can also share their own desktop with the rest of the group to share any difficulties or learnings and to seek help from EBM librarians.

Please contact Robert Hayward (robert.hayward@cche.net) or Louisa Fricker (louisa.fricker@cche.net) at the Centre for Health Evidence (www.cche.net) for more information about the curriculum, workshops or webinars.

