

# The Need for Evidence-based Medicine for Improving Oral Health Strategies

How often do we hear or use phrases like 'it works in my hands', 'I believe in that procedure' or 'my colleague got great results using this material'?

Experience is a very good tool for learning and becoming proficient in the medical and dental fields. However, when it comes to the real evaluation of practices, strategies and decisions, personal experience is definitely not enough, as it can be very biased and misleading. Sometimes, even unconsciously, we see things the way we would like to see them, and here is where a good evidence-based approach should be utilised to better assess our available knowledge. Admittedly, it is not an easy task! It involves meticulous planning, rigorous data collection, appropriate analysis and knowledge dissemination. Nevertheless, this is the best way to acquire reliable information and to move forward with confidence.

The evidence-based approach should be part of our professional life at all levels. When we practice, we should be able to critically analyse the available literature and evidence in order to make informed and well-founded clinical decisions about the approaches we take, the materials we use and the treatments we offer and provide. Preferably, we should also try to collect valid information from our own experience and make use of this data properly

to add to the overall knowledge in our field. Though not an easy task, it can be done in every dental office over time and can contribute substantially to our future understanding and base of evidence.

At the public decision-making level, the evidence-based approach is even more crucial. We cannot afford to make decisions that will influence a whole population without having the proper support and evidence. Health-related decisions with far-reaching effects on the well-being of our society should solely be made and supported by the best available evidence. It cannot be influenced or driven by beliefs, pre-conceptions or biases. It is our duty as healthcare professionals not only to promote evidence-based approaches but also to use and endorse them at all levels. This will move our profession forward in the right direction.



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