

39. Evidence Based Medicine in Insurance Medicine: Common Practice in the Near Future?

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Introduction

Evidence-based medicine (EBM), a comprehensive method to support clinical decision making by using evidence, has been instrumental in clinical specialties, but not yet in insurance medicine. Disability assessments up till now are usually based on the expert judgements of the physician involved and the use of scientific evidence is not yet common practice. To facilitate the uptake of scientific evidence there is a great need for more training in EBM for social insurance physicians.

Aims

We developed and evaluated a workshop on EBM for Dutch social insurance physicians who perform disability assessments.

Methods

Sixty-six social insurance physicians followed a one-day introductory workshop that focused on teaching two EBM core skills: to formulate answerable questions and to search for the best evidence. All outcomes were measured before, immediately after and 3 months after the workshop using self-report. The primary outcomes were knowledge, skills, attitude and intention to apply EBM in practice. The secondary outcomes were social influence, self-efficacy and behaviour.

Results

Immediately after the workshop, a marked and significant improvement was seen in self-assessed skills (mean difference 4.2, 95% CI 3.7–4.6) and in self-efficacy to apply EBM (mean difference 0.7, 95% CI 0.6–0.8). For attitude, knowledge and intention, the improvements were small. Three months after the workshop, the improvements in skills (mean difference 2.3, 95% CI 1.8–2.9) and self-efficacy (mean difference 0.5, 95% CI 0.3–0.6) remained significant.

Conclusions

The workshop improved self-reported EBM skills and self-efficacy both in the short and long term. The workshop also resulted in limited short-term improvements in self-assessed knowledge and in the intention to apply EBM in practice. The EBM approach can be successfully taught to social insurance physicians working in the field of disability assessment. For the implementation of EBM use in practice a more comprehensive educational approach is recommended.