Research Translation Brief: The Difference Between Evidence-Based Medicine, Evidence-Based (Clinical) Practice, and Evidence-Based Health Care

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Key Question

Are evidence-based medicine (EBM), evidence-based practice (EBP), evidence-based clinical practice (EBCP), and evidence-based health care (EBHC) truly distinct concepts, or are these terms being used inconsistently across healthcare literature?

Why It Matters

Healthcare and psychotherapy professionals frequently use evidence-based terminology interchangeably despite inconsistent definitions across disciplines and publications. Conceptual ambiguity surrounding evidence terminology may contribute to confusion in clinical training, implementation, research interpretation, and professional communication.

Key Findings & Concepts

- Early EBM frameworks emphasized literature retrieval, critical appraisal, and evidence synthesis skills.
- Multiple healthcare publications use EBM, EBP, EBCP, and EBHC interchangeably despite proposing conceptual differences.
- Definitions across the literature are often inconsistent, weakly sourced, or circular.
- Excessive and evolving terminology may confuse clinicians and evidence consumers.
- Some authors distinguish EBM as individual patient decision-making and EBHC as population-level decision-making, though no universally accepted taxonomy exists.

Important Caveats

- This publication is a conceptual commentary/letter to the editor rather than an empirical study.
- The article discusses terminology and conceptual clarity but does not directly examine patient outcomes or implementation effectiveness.
- The paper focuses broadly on healthcare terminology rather than psychotherapy implementation specifically.

Clinical & Implementation Implications

The article highlights how inconsistent evidence terminology may contribute to conceptual confusion in healthcare training and clinical implementation. Stronger research literacy and clearer operational definitions may improve communication, implementation consistency, and clinician understanding of what constitutes evidence-based care.