Internal and External Data

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Every day brings a new opportunity for health care professionals to implement evidence based practice (EBP) in their facility. In order to properly do so, quality research must be done. When performing a research study it is important to follow a few well established steps. Developing a PICO question is one of the first steps a researcher should perform. In the process of answering the PICO question, the researcher should turn to both internal and external data sources. However both are important to consider concerning evidence based practice. Both are important in researching the PICO question given below regarding the colorectal surgery protocol in colorectal surgery patients in preventing incidents of infection after the procedure.

**External Data**

Studying the external data in this instance would be researching medical databases, scientific papers, published journals, previous studies, medical textbooks, etc. (Melnyk & Fineout-Overholt, 2015). A good place to start is doing a systematic review with several quality databases such as PubMed, Medline, and the Cumulative Index to Nursing & Allied Health Literature (CINAHL) (Research Guides, 2017). Perusing these databases gives you access to the highest standard of systematic research available (Cochrane, 2017). This is done in order to find quality data to establish best practice on the matter. Depending on what terms are searched for results can be just a few or numbered in the thousands (see table 2).

**Internal Data**

Internal data on the subject is specific to the personal experience the researcher has in the matter. This is not limited to their personal experience, but also includes the experience and past histories on the matter of the physicians, staff, and facility around them (see table 1). The researcher is to ask questions like, “Have I seen an effect in colorectal screenings in regards to later infections in my personal experience? Are there patient assessments that would have usable data? Do any of the physicians who practice in my facility have any experience either here or at another hospital with this matter? Has my healthcare facility had a history of treatment of this subject on record? ” (Melnyk & Fineout-Overholt, 2015). Both external and internal data are important for establishing EBP. Establishing EBP is not possible without having quality data on the subject. Both external and internal data is important to ensure the best results for EBP.

**Conclusion**

To properly research a method, policy, procedure, etc. it is important to employ both external and internal sources of data. In this case where the rate of infection is measured in relation to whether or not the patients had the proper colorectal protocol, internal and external sources of data are useful in determining the result. Bot external and internal sources have positive and negative elements. However utilizing both will provide the researcher with a solid foundation of systematic research in order to establish new policy, best practice, protocol, etc.

References

Cochrane. (n.d.). Retrieved June 04, 2017, from http://www.cochrane.org/what-is-cochrane-evidence

Melnyk, B. M., Fineout-Overholt, E. (2015). Evidence-based practice in nursing and healthcare: A guide to best practice. (3rd Ed.). Lippincott Williams & Wilkins: Philidelphia

Research Guides: Nursing Evidence Based Practice Resources: Meta-Search Engines. (n.d.). Retrieved June 04, 2017, from http://guides.library.vcu.edu/ebpsteps/metasearchengine

PICO Question: “Does the initiation of a colorectal surgery protocol lead to decreased infection rates in the first 30 days following surgery in colorectal surgery patients?”

Table 1

Internal Data



Table 2

External Data

Table 3

Matrix Grid







