

-----VA Technology Watch----- July/August 2000-----

Notes on Evidence-Based Health Care by the VA Technology Assessment Program

This periodic e-mail presents current notes on a range of evidence-based assessments, systematic reviews, and reports on therapies and other interventions relevant to VA populations. Please forward it to anyone you know who might be interested. Three sections contain information: **Blue** text is info on VA TAP projects and reports, **green** text is info on reports from other national and international agencies, and **purple** text is for web based information resources.

The VA TAP moves to Patient Care Services: On June 5th the TAP moved from HSR&D to the Office of Patient Care Services, reporting to Dr. Thomas Holohan. Closer organizational proximity to clinical care and the associated decision making processes should encourage the increasing relevance of TAP products to VA health care managers and providers. We also expect that more direct access to Dr. Holohan's expertise in technology assessment and regular communication with the Chief Consultants to the Strategic Healthcare Groups, will benefit the quality and scope of our products.

TAP continues to reside at the Boston VAMC, within space also occupied by HSR&D's Management Decision and Research Center (MDRC). TAP staff phone numbers have changed, along with mailing and e-mail addresses. Current contact information is located at the bottom of this document. The Program will continue to provide technical and analytic services to VA's Technology Recommendations Panel (TRP).

VA TAP Reports:

- This month we attach a link to **Impacts of Case Management Programs, Short Report #4** one of our NEW VA TAP Short Report Series. Network Directors, Clinical Managers, or Senior VA managers usually request these short reports on specific topics: http://www.va.gov/vatap/pubs/ta_short_7_00.pdf
- The TAP has produced several longer reports on current topics. These reports are on the TAP web page: <http://www.va.gov/vatap/publications.htm>.

Assessment reports from other agencies:

U.S. Government General Accounting Office recently produced a report and testimony on reusing single use medical devices.

- **Single-Use Medical Devices: Little Available Evidence of Harm From Reuse, but Oversight Warranted.** <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/he00123.pdf> 27 pp. plus 2 appendices (5 pp.) June 20, 2000.

- Medical Devices: Reprocessing and Reuse of Devices Labeled Single-Use. <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/he00143t.pdf> 9 pp. June 27, 2000. [Testimony by GAO to Congress]

Alberta Medical Foundation for Medical Research.

- Allogeneic stem cell transplantation methods. January 2000. <http://www.ahfmr.ab.ca/download.php/f7fc88a9ce4df18f88e12c8703975cb1>
- Brachytherapy for prostate cancer. December 1999. <http://www.ahfmr.ab.ca/download.php/7cc05b9a9b4aa8afdfdd67fd8651358d>

Canadian Coordinating Office for Health Technology Assessment.

- Drug Treatments for Alzheimer's Disease. I. A Comparative Analysis of Clinical Trials (2000) https://www.ccohta.ca/publications/pdf/106_alzheimers1_tr_e.pdf
- Drug Treatments for Alzheimer's Disease. II. A Review of Outcome Measures in Clinical Trials (2000) https://www.ccohta.ca/publications/pdf/118_alzheimer2_tr_e.pdf

Australian Medicare Services Advisory Committee:

- Strengthening evidence-based health care in Australia <http://www.msac.gov.au>
- Hepatitis C viral load testing. <http://www.msac.gov.au/pdfs/reports/msac1021.pdf>

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Evidence Report/Technology Assessment:

- Evidence Report Number 23 on Criteria for Weaning from Mechanical Ventilation. <http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/epcsums/mechsumm.htm>

Web based information resources you can use:

Bandolier is a print and Internet newsletter about health care, using evidence-based medicine techniques to provide advice about particular treatments or diseases for healthcare professionals and consumers. **Bandolier** distills the information from (secondary) reviews of (primary) trials and making it comprehensible. **Bandolier** is produced at Oxford University in Britain and is related to the Cochrane Collaboration (<http://www.cochrane.org/index0.htm>). **Bandolier** finds information about evidence of effectiveness (or lack of it), and puts it forward as simple "bullet-points" of those things that worked and those things that didn't in an eight-page format. Information was to come from systematic reviews of the literature, from Effectiveness Bulletins from York, from randomised controlled trials and from high quality case-control, cohort or observational studies. The first issue of **Bandolier** was published in February 1994, and monthly since. **Bandolier** has become the premier source of evidence-based information for GPs in England <http://www.jr2.ox.ac.uk/bandolier/>

Have a technology question? Ask the VA Technology Assessment Program to Assist

To Contact Us:

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We can provide short reports synthesizing the published medical literature and other information—highlighting the strengths, weaknesses, and levels of scientific evidence supporting use of a specific technology. The short report takes about two to four weeks and is tailored to your specific needs.

Food for Thought: "One of the major reasons why there has been so much interest in evidence-based approaches to health care is the growing number of examples where current medical practice has lagged significantly behind the available research evidence. For example, despite strong evidence during the 1970s that treatments such as thrombolytic therapy and aspirin were effective in the treatment of acute myocardial infarction, it took almost a further decade before these treatments were being recommended routinely."

Chris Silagy and David Weller. Evidence based practice in primary care: an introduction. In: Evidence Based Practice in Primary Care. London: BMJ Books, 1998.

Watch for the September 2000 E-mail -- We welcome your feedback!
