

## 2009 International Campbell Collaboration (C2) Colloquium

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### Abstract Information

**Abstract Title:**

The use of evidence in mental health practice: An analysis of pilot study data.

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Poster

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**Abstract:**

Recent literature and policy movements have given a great deal of focus to evidence-based practice (EBP) in social services, however there remains little clarity in the literature as to the realities of what these concepts look like in practice. As educational models in the social sciences and policy pressure on human services continue to develop, it is imperative to examine what is being considered as evidence for practice, how evidence is being accessed, interpreted and used by practitioners, and what barriers may exist to the uptake of research. Practitioner voice has been largely absent from the literature related to EBP, and an exploratory study was initiated to examine this area, grounded in an extensive literature review. A pilot study involving an internet-based survey was done during the spring of 2008. The study was grounded in the Plath (2006) model of EBP, and used a snowball method of recruitment (n 84). Plath's model offers an integrated view of practice and environment, where factors are closely interrelated to one another. Factors that contribute to the personal, professional, political, and interpersonal domains of practice were endorsed by respondents, and suggest that practitioners may use each of these domains as a contributing factor to practice decision making. Recruitment of participants focused on social service providers in any practice field. Thirty-nine percent indicated that they regularly provide services in more than one work environment, and 65 percent indicated that they regularly work with more than one client population. Although respondents indicated that a significant number consider themselves as evidence-based practitioners, substantial numbers of them are not asked to justify their intervention choices by their supervisors. Data indicate that practitioners with graduate degrees are more likely to self-identify as evidence-based practitioners than those who have undergraduate degrees. Respondents practicing in evidence oriented settings, such as medical settings, were less likely to respond negatively to EBP models. Those in non-profit settings were much more divided on this issue, echoing the continuum suggested in the literature. Data suggest low frequency of database access (such as the Cochrane or Campbell Collaboration databases). Responses to open-ended questions trended towards a mention of both positive and negative aspects of the EBP movement. Few respondents aligned with the process orientation currently being discussed in the social work literature. Plath, D. (2006). Evidence-based practice: Current issues and future directions. *Australian Social Work*, 59(1), 56-72.

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