

# Medical students' attitudes & use of evidence based medicine

A qualitative study

**Dr Dragan Ilic**

Senior Lecturer  
Monash Institute of Health Services Research  
Monash University



## Background

- EBM core subject in medical education
- EBM courses result in increase of knowledge & skill acquisition
- Medical student perception on EBM???
  - Driven by assessments not by application
- Monash MBBS degree
  - Years 1-2 university based
  - Years 3-5 hospital based

## **Aims**

To identify undergraduate medical student perceptions on EBM including;

- Current use as students, and
- Future use as clinicians

## **Methods**

- Focus group discussions with 23 third year medical students
- Criteria-based, volunteer sampling was used to recruit eligible participants
- All focus groups homogeneous to hospital setting (metropolitan or rural)
- Independent thematic analysis

## Results

### 1. Current use of EBM as students

- Applying evidence into practice
- Relevant in current year of 'practice'
- Applicability to PBL tutorials

## Results

### 2. Future use of EBM as clinicians

- Process for 'continuing education' as clinicians
- Critical mind even though not specifically implementing it on a daily basis

*'I don't know that I'd specifically use it (critical appraisal) but once you know it you always think about it when you're looking at things'*

## Results

### 3. Barriers for EBM use

- Behaviour and uptake of 'senior' clinicians
- Resources in clinical setting
  - Technology
  - Common 'meeting of the minds'

## Results

### 4. Facilitators for EBM use

- Mentorship from clinicians as students  
*'It's embedded in the culture, like I see everybody doing it so I think I'll do it'*
- 'Meeting of the minds'
  - Students + early-career clinicians + mid-career clinicians + senior clinicians

## Limitations

- Qualitative data provides context ≠ generalisability is questionable in different settings
- Facilitator was course coordinator
  - Participants confirmed it did not influence their responses
  - Anonymous quantitative survey validated qualitative findings

## Conclusions

- Acceptance of EBM when there is a demonstrable link between 'theory' & practice (hospital setting)
- Greater emphasis on EBM mentorship
  - Clinical tutors
  - Integrated activities between students & clinicians