

A new MSc in Evidence-Based Social Work at Oxford University



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Outline

- ◆ Why Evidence-Based Social Work? A little history
- ◆ Aims of the course
- ◆ Challenges for the field



Why Evidence-Based Social Work?

- ◆ Scope of social work
- ◆ Very wide range of settings and goals - challenges of gathering and applying evidence
- ◆ Yet overlap with other professions means wealth of potential evidence
- ◆ Low level of skill and acceptance of rigorous EBP principles
- ◆ Yet clear need for EBP from funders; ethical practice

Some history:



- ◆ 'Golden age' of RCT's in social work and policy?
- ◆ Why interest in RCT's waned until very recently?
- ◆ Cambridge-Somerville study salutary
- ◆ CBT; recent rise of EBHC; spread to other professions; Campbell Collaboration, UK Centre for Evidence Based Social Services, etc



MSc in Evidence-Based Social Work

Learning objectives

- ◆ Research methods - causal & intervention questions
- ◆ Critically appraise intervention studies; apply findings to practice
- ◆ Skills for designing randomised controlled trials
- ◆ Skills for practitioner evaluation, and limitations
- ◆ Issues in transporting findings across cultures & into service settings; potential barriers/ limitations of EBP
- ◆ Effective interventions in specialist area (e.g. AIDS children & families; mental health; refugees; drugs)

MSc in Evidence-Based Social Work

Course structure



1. Core intervention course

Theoretical models; community, family & individual approaches; transportability of research cross-cultures, to practice; becoming an EB practitioner

2. Core research methods course.

Research design, data collection; critical appraisal; ethics; statistical & qualitative methods. Social care trial egs

3. Specialist option papers re findings, applications

4. Thesis 10,000 words

Some of the challenges for Evidence-Based Social Work



- ◆ 'there is no evidence'
- ◆ 'it doesn't apply to my service'
- ◆ 'EBP was invented for medicine not social care – our problems, settings, goals are different & too complex'
- ◆ 'we use EBP already'
- ◆ don't have time & skill, nor quantitative background
- ◆ 'you can't really quantify these things'