

EDITORIAL

Real evidence: Sometimes hard to come by, now more accessible

Scientific evidence substantiates many of the clinical decisions that we make in the day-to-day care of our patients. For example:

- We draw conclusions about normal and abnormal growth patterns from data incorporated into growth charts
- We administer infant and childhood immunizations on a schedule that has been derived from randomized, controlled trials demonstrating their efficacy and safety
- And we use diagnostic tests that have been validated by comparing them to an accepted gold standard

Other management decisions that we make, however, aren't based on convincing scientific evidence. Instead, we act on what we were taught during residency training, or on a suggestion made by a colleague or a recent article on the subject, or simply on our own accumulation of experience. Furthermore, research on children that yields *validated* new information by which to guide our everyday decision-making is difficult and expensive; sometimes—as with recommendations about the use of pharmaceuticals—we are left to extrapolate from studies of adult subjects.

That difficulty in finding solid evidential ground for our work is the rationale behind InfoPOEMs—an undertaking in medical literacy that provides clinicians with the material for decision-making in their work, presented in reviews known as **Patient-Oriented Evidence that Matters** (POEMs). I am pleased to announce that, beginning with this issue (see page 88), POEMs of pediatric topics developed by the staff of InfoPOEMs will appear in the pages of *Contemporary Pediatrics*.

The creators of InfoPOEMs are practicing physicians. Their system for analyzing the current medical literature identifies published articles that provide valid and practical information that can be used in patient management.* The structured, systematic review of a POEM analyzes research design and validity of results. Every month, the leaders of InfoPOEMs apply review criteria to approximately 1,200 articles culled from more than 100 medical journals. Articles selected using these criteria that reflect your needs will appear periodically on the concluding editorial page of *Contemporary Pediatrics* (the page that faces the inside back cover). It's up to you to judge the best use of the conclusions offered by a POEM in your clinical setting.

As the POEM in the debut installment demonstrates (“Daily valacyclovir prevents transmission of HSV-2 infection”), you may be required to extrapolate to children and adolescents information collected from studies of adults. As part of our new-born partnership with InfoPOEMs and its reviewers, we will work together to provide you with helpful summaries of the best studies, with the most relevance, for your work.



Julia A. McMillan, MD, editor-in-chief of *Contemporary Pediatrics*, is professor of pediatrics, vice chair for pediatric education, and director of the residency training program, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore.

*Editor's note: For more background on InfoPOEMs and its review process, visit www.infopoems.com.