

From the Editor...

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Welcome to Volume 3 of *Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) Briefs*. The Briefs are tools to help school Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) understand the scientific dimension of the field and they how can apply scientific evidence to clinical practice to improve the quality of learning for the children we serve. This year we have focused on the LITERACY interventions for school-age children. Each Brief addresses a "real work-world" situation that SLPs face every day. Evidence-based practice continues to gain momentum in the clinical decision-making process in public schools.

In this volume, all of the Briefs are presented as interventions currently being used in the school setting. These include the use of phonics for teaching reading and spelling, using story grammar to teach reading comprehension, improving writing skills, using phonemic awareness training for pre-reading skill development, and improving spelling skills using a word study approach.

Philosopher-cowboy Will Rogers observed that "It ain't what we don't know that gets us in trouble; it's what we do know that ain't so." This truth applies to the clinical setting. Beliefs and strategies that our professors, workshop presenters, or colleagues passionately advocated for use with SLP caseloads sometimes were not supported by persuasive examples of evidence. We hope that the EBP Briefs offer you an approach to gathering, analyzing, and implementing scientific evidence in your daily work place. We, as professionals, can do no less for our constituents than work to provide the highest quality, most effective instructional and remedial programs. It is our mission and we believe an evidence-based approach is at the heart of this mission.

We often speak about bridging the clinical–research gap and struggle to find ways and sources to help us accomplish that task. As a prime source of clinical services to children with communication disorders, we need to be proactive in building that bridge. I often hear clinicians say that research by university professors has little relevance to the real world of speech-language pathology. I also hear university professors lament the lack of a "scientific attitude" by school clinicians. In both cases, the professionals are right ... and they are wrong! A review of the literature shows too little research directly related to evaluating the effectiveness of intervention programs, strategies, and techniques. It just isn't being produced at the volume that clinicians need to help them deliver the best interventions available. On the other hand, studies have consistently shown that once the clinician leaves formal training of the university, their attention to the scientific basis of their profession drops off in a rapid and sustained manner. In other words, there is a reduction of the reading the journals, attending conferences, and engaging in the scientific aspects of our profession.

Here is where EBP Briefs and the evidence-based practice movement can make a difference. We *can* begin to bridge the clinical–research gap. First, if the SLP doesn't demand a better product, the product isn't likely to be built. The SLP clinical community needs to stand up and be counted by pressing our research community to produce research that directly and clearly addresses effective treatments—studies that use the best available and appropriate scientific methods! If we don't *demand* this level of applied research, 75 years of professional history tells us that we are not going to get it!

Second, clinicians have to reinvent themselves as clinical scientists. Not just in word, but actually begin to collect data on treatments they deliver, learn about levels of evidence quality, and learn how to critically evaluate any commercial program that purports to be the guide for an "evidence-based intervention approach." Clinicians will have to get in the "scientist game" and researchers will have to get in the "clinical game;" because neither is going to be effective while "riding the bench."

I welcome you to this edition of EBP Briefs. We believe that this publication offers, at the very least, a model for bridging the research-clinician gap. But we also suggest that it provides a window into some of the important issues that clinicians face every day on the job as they work to assist their children in improving their communication skills.

The papers published in the this volume of EBP Briefs include (1) guidelines for evidence applications to decisions in literacy research, (2) available evidence for the effective use of phonemic awareness, reading comprehension interventions, and interventions to improve writing and spelling. We encourage you to engage in the thoughtful and critical use of these papers in your professional life.