

Hitting the Headlines

Should we believe what we read in the press?

Introduction

Health stories are news stories. Most days, newspapers carry reports about health care, including stories about the effects of new treatments or diagnostic tests. Such stories can create expectations or anxieties in patients and pressure for health professionals. It is important therefore to know the facts behind the headlines.

This poster has been designed by the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD) to help health care professionals to assess the reliability of news stories and the quality of the research evidence on which they are based.

Need to know more?

When faced with a headline such as: 'DRUG RISKS OUTWEIGH BENEFIT' you ask yourself:

- Does this story have implications for my practice?
- Will patients want advice and answers to questions?

If the answer to these questions is 'yes', you may need to take a closer look at the research behind the headline.

Hitting the Headlines – www.nelh.nhs.uk

Staff at CRD locate and critically examine the research behind the headlines. Unbiased, brief and readable summaries appraising the research evidence are posted on the NeLH web site within 48 hours of publication. You can search the archive for topics covered previously by *Hitting the Headlines*: www.nelh.nhs.uk/hth/archive.asp

Take a closer look

Has the story already been covered by *Hitting the Headlines*? If not, here's how to do it for yourself:

Finding the research

Sometimes the newspaper article just says that 'researchers have found...' but gives no further clues. Although you cannot search for the specific research behind the story you can do a general search of the web using keywords in the article to discover if anyone else has mentioned this research. Contact your local librarian for help.

Sometimes the newspaper story will only report the name of a researcher, an organisation or a scientific conference. Some detective work will be required. You can search the web for the researcher's name, organisation, funding body or conference. Contact your local librarian for help.

Identifying the research can be relatively straightforward if a newspaper article clearly states that it has been published in a named journal (e.g. BMJ or Lancet). Many journals are available in your local health care library or on the web (many charge for access). Contact your local librarian for help.

Found it! Now what?

Just because it has been published, you should not accept the research at face value. You need to critically appraise the quality of the research. Different types of research require different questions to be asked to gain a sense of whether the research was well conducted and whether its results are reliable. Many checklists are available for appraising research. A list of key resources can be found at: www.nelh.nhs.uk/hth/help4.asp

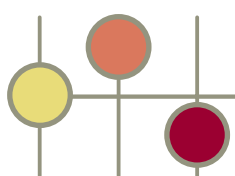
Unable to find the research ?

If you can't find the research behind the news story you may still want to find current evidence on the topic to discuss with your patients. To find the latest evidence on effectiveness, search the NeLH or ask your local librarian.

The NeLH provides access to over 70 electronic resources including collections of systematic reviews such as the Cochrane Library and DARE, bibliographic databases, practice guidelines and critically appraised studies.

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Local Contact



Promoting the use of research based knowledge

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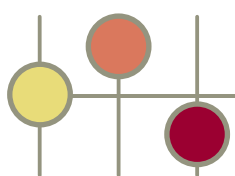
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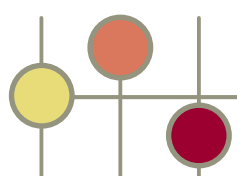
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