FEATURE

SUB HEAD XX XXXXX

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

This is the first in a new monthly series of evidence-based practice (EBP) tutorials aimed at providing members with a toolkit to access and use research evidence in their clinical practice.

In last month’s Bulletin (‘From research aware to research active’ p11) our Research Councillor Jan Broomfield introduced some of the ideas for the Research Strategy implementation that arose from RCSLT members who attended the Research Study Day in Newcastle in March 2010. Amongst the partners who supported the RCSLT in the organisation and content of the day were the Northern Research Specific Interest Group (SIG), the North of Tyne SLT Research Collaboration and Newcastle University.

The Northern Research SIG is a long established group of SLTs in the North of England with an interest in conducting and applying research. The SIG has a close working relationship with Newcastle University, local NHS Trusts, PCTs and independent SLT providers in order to provide clinicians with the best possible support and a wide range of opportunities. This includes EBP, implementing research findings, evaluating clinical practice and contributing to larger research projects with external funding.

This collaborative model of research support and engagement may not be unique to the North East and is certainly not the only way of increasing research capacity in speech and language therapy. However, local organisations of working clinicians with close links to academics who have an interest in clinical research are ideally placed to define the research agenda for the profession and contribute to the evidence base. This premise was one of the themes of the Research Study Day and this series of articles in Bulletin is one of the outcomes.

Understanding and using existing research evidence provides a sound basis for clinicians to develop clinical research questions of their own. Over the next months we will be publishing a series of short EBP toolkit tutorials with contributions from members to illustrate the wide range of EBP activity that SLTs undertake.

The aim is to not only provide information, but to signpost the way to existing resources, acknowledging that not all members work in settings that are well resourced in terms of access to research literature. The tutorials will take us from understanding what EBP is through formulating questions and searching for evidence to deciding to change our practice in response to new knowledge.

The use of evidence in our practice leads us to identify gaps in that evidence. Speech and language therapy has a long history of research in practice, with the majority of SLTs having a good background in research training. It may be many years since you used your research skills, if so, now is the time to start dusting them off.

If you are keeping your skills sharp in EBP activity then we would like to hear from you. Email me at: h.b.stringer@ncl.ac.uk with ‘Bulletin EBP’ in the subject field.