

USING  
RESEARCH IN  
HEALTHCARE  
PRACTICE

# USING RESEARCH IN HEALTHCARE PRACTICE

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# PREFACE

An understanding of the importance of evidence-based care is a fundamental element of all health professional preparatory courses. The research component of many undergraduate courses can, however, prove challenging for both the beginning healthcare professional who grapples with unfamiliar language and the members of academic faculty who seek to demystify the complexities associated with the research process. Numerous publications exist that focus on the principles, procedures and application of research in health care, yet few truly provide a foundation for accessing, comprehending, evaluating and applying research in the practice setting. Through addressing this deficit, this text promotes an understanding and appreciation of the role of evidence in ensuring quality healthcare.

This text is divided into three sections. Section I introduces basic concepts of research and evidence-based healthcare. In this section the reader will explore current trends in healthcare research and examine ethical and legal issues that may impact on the conduct of research in the contemporary environment. Section II aims to instil in the reader an understanding of the research process. This section provides an overview of the various stages that comprise a research study, establishing in the novice healthcare professional sufficient understanding to enable them to make judgements about how adequately a given study may have been conducted. Section III builds on the knowledge acquired in the previous sections of the book by providing detailed guidelines for determining the quality of research findings along with strategies that ultimately position the reader to bring evidence to the point of care.

In writing this text we have sought to move away from traditional dichotomous perspectives of qualitative and quantitative approaches to research, favouring instead to discuss the generation of evidence in healthcare through interpretive and statistical methods. The increasing recognition of the value of mixed methods research is emphasised throughout the discussion. Each of the chapters contains examples of relevant, contemporary healthcare research drawn from various disciplines. Studies conducted in Australia and New Zealand are highlighted, contextualising and increasing the relevance of the context for the reader. These examples are supplemented with activities that encourage the reader to interact with the content of the discussion. Reflective exercises and activities further serve to aid in consolidating the understanding of concepts contained in each chapter.

We wish to acknowledge the excellent partnership that we enjoyed with Ann Nolan in her editorial role and also thank Lindsay Smith from the University of Tasmania for the valuable contribution made through his considered review of the manuscript for this book. We hope that our passion for evidence-based health care, its significance to the development of healthcare professionals and its value in improving the quality of the lives of those with whom we engage on a daily basis is evident throughout this text.