Navigating The Borders Of Evidence

ScWk 816 Advanced Generalist Practice with Individuals

Thanh Vo

Wichita State University, School of Social Work

The demand for social work practitioners to use evidence-based practice in their field of work has been increasing. The World Wide Web has allowed social workers easy access to an overabundance of sources and types of evidence. These are resources that can be utilized to assist social workers on finding the best interventions for their clients. Although this innovation in information technology is great for the social work profession, there are drawbacks. Social work practitioners should be aware of the boundaries when using evidence into their practice. A successful intervention may have worked for clients in that country but may not be successful in another country. There are cultural differences that may influence the outcomes of an intervention.

Another issue that the article presented discusses factors and limitations with social workers not having access to every evidence-based practice. One key aspect that may limit the social worker’s ability to review available sources of evidence is the linguistic barriers. A research article published in a language other than English could limit American researchers to not use this evidence into their practice. There is also the issue of time constraints. It can be difficult to find and evaluate appropriate evidence and then apply it. Practitioners may use data to which are readily available to them, without having a detailed knowledge of the literature.

The article expressed clearly about the boundaries that social workers will encounter in their practice. I concur with how the article explained the factors and influences that may cause social workers to choose what evidence-based practice to utilize in their own practice. The article discussed nine inquiries that social workers should consider when selecting which research evidence to use in their professional practice. I find the inquiry; “To what extent do personal factors impinge on my evaluation of this evidence?” is very important for social workers to consider seriously to be able to put aside their own biases and take on a professional role as a social worker (Crisp, 2004).

I believe the weakness of this article is that the length of the article was too short. The article provided great information, but I would appreciate more in-depth information. The article did not mention if a survey was conducted to social workers to explain the findings in the article. So, it leaves me to question on how the author of this article came to its findings. Also, I had recognized that the author is from the University of Glasgow which is from a different country than the United States. Because of the culture differences, the article may not be suitable for social workers in the United States compared to social workers in Scotland, UK.

Cultural competency is reflected in the article discussing about cultural differences among clients from one country and clients from a different country. The effectiveness of an intervention may be limited due to what population is being served. Be informed about why a particular intervention worked successfully for one population and why it would not be successful with a different population. Practitioners should also be aware of their own personal values and biases that may have an effect on on how they perform in their practice.

The article addresses a few of social work values and principles. The demand that social work be a profession committed to evidence-based practice will allow social work practitioners to implement the best interventions to serve their client’s needs. The social workers’ primary goal is to help people in need and to address social problems. The evidence-based practice will give social workers knowledge on what evidence is suitable to utilize in their practice.

Competence is a value that is discussed in the article. Social workers are to practice within their areas of competence and develop and enhance their professional expertise. Social workers having access to evidence-based practice allows the practitioners to expand their knowledge base about sources and types of evidences. Social workers should keep current with professional literature, and remain open to the implications of new research, especially research findings on the effectiveness of various interventions. This will promote practitioners to use the best intervention available to address their client’s needs.

Intervention in the social work practice will be based from evidence-based practice. Practitioners with knowledge about evidence-based practice will help guide them to determine which intervention is effective for their client’s needs and which intervention is not effective. The nine inquires that the article suggest for practitioners when selecting which research evidence to use in their professional practice can be a prevention from practitioners choosing inappropriate evidence. Then, the practitioner will evaluate what evidence is approropriate to apply into their practice.

 A possible implication to propose to large social work agencies is the requirement that employees in the social work agencies have access to retrieve evidence-based practice research articles. Whether online or subscribing to academic journals in social work and other related disciplines, the employees should have access to these resources. With easy access to these resources, social workers will be inclined to expand their knowledge base. This proposal supports the important principle that every social workers should seek to enhance professional competence. The social work profession is ever-changing so it is important to keep current with society needs. Research has informed us that some approaches and interventions are more effective than others; some approaches are ineffective; and some are even harmful. This new policy will help educate social work professionals so they will achieve more successful outcomes with their clients against the negative outcomes.

References

Crisp, Beth. "Evidence-based practice and the borders of data in the global information era." *Journal of Social Work Education* 40 (2004): 73-86.