

Evidence-Based Medicine Made Easy

Editorial Staff

Evidence-based medicine or *best practices* are phrases used regularly within the acupuncture and Oriental medicine profession. Some might even say they are the Holy Grail for AOM and other alternative medicines to gain legitimacy. However, it can be time-consuming to sort through all the data and compare treatments for efficacy, particularly for a busy clinician with patients who all expect solutions right away.

The solution might be as close as your nearest academic library or hospital. Natural Standard (www.naturalstandard.com) is a nonprofit "international research collaboration that aggregates and synthesizes data on complementary and alternative therapies." The organization sifts through mounds of scientific data by using a grading scale in order to create information databases that are "evidence-based, consensus-based, and peer-reviewed, tapping into the collective expertise of a multidisciplinary Editorial Board." While these databases are not available to individuals on their home or practice computers, they can be accessed via academic university libraries or hospital systems.

What this means for the average practitioner is that they now have the ability to take advantage of the work Natural Standard has already done. They can now easily and quickly compare efficacy for various treatments in terms of scientific strength and validity. The Web site's mission, in line with this, is to "provide objective, reliable information that aids clinicians, patients and healthcare institutions to make more informed and safer therapeutic decisions." You can download a demo and view examples by clicking on the "Demo" button on the right-hand side of the homepage.

There are three different monographs available, as well as news updates, patient handouts and two comparison databases. As an example of one comparative efficacy chart, Natural Standards gives yoga a B ("Good Scientific Evidence") rating for treating anxiety conditions.

The editorial board features an extensive list of people in alternative medicine, including:

- Ionela O. Hubbard, LAc, MAOM, assistant professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation at Loma Linda University School of Medicine, where she developed and runs the clinical acupuncture rotations;
- Karta Purkh Singh Khalsa, CDN, RH (AHG). who teaches ayurvedic and botanical medicine in the naturopathic doctoral program and the herbal sciences bachelor's program at Bastyr University; and
- Yanze Liu, PhD , a board member of *Chinese Traditional and Herbal Drugs* , a prestigious journal in the area of herbal medicine research of China.

JULY 2008