



PRACTICAL RESEARCH

EBM: In Search of Best Evidence (Pt. 2)

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Perhaps you are interested in finding information about what acupuncture points have been *proven* to work for headaches according to the latest research. You may feel you already know how to treat headaches, but maybe you have patients who have been challenging and you are looking for the latest information available about the condition your patients may have.

Once you find the information, you can talk about the treatment protocol you are using, as well as the latest research, with your patients and your colleagues. Perhaps you can do your own mini-clinical study and work on publishing it in a journal yourself. And why not?

There is a simple internet search process we can follow in order to find information about treatment protocols quickly and easily. For example, what acupuncture points have been successful for headaches according to the latest research?

Many of us may already be aware of PubMed, a free indexing (search engine) system that provides citation services for references and abstracts on biomedical literature. The references are from international sources and PubMed consists mostly of MEDLINE. *Sources in Chinese and Korean are also available.* Abstracts are in English, and the abstract page will contain information about what language the referenced documents are in.



The citations may include what is called *full-text content* either from PubMed Central or from publisher websites that published the clinical study. Full-text content refers to a published article that is available in its entirety. Otherwise, only abstracts are available for further study.

For those of us who do not have free access to subscription services for medical databases, such as MEDLINE or EBSCO, the best option for us is using PubMed Central. PMC provides free full-text access to biomedical literature. PubMed Central is available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/>.

That is the simple and straightforward part of this process. The next part of the process involves developing a basic understanding about clinical studies and how to find information about clinical studies.

A short 15-minute YouTube video [created by Dr. Choi] is available for you to follow through the process. The video is called "[Finding Acupuncture Treatment Modalities With PubMed Central.](#)"

We will also outline the process here as well. Remember, the purpose is to find the latest research, or to find out about what information is available regarding your patient's condition. Perhaps there is a condition you are interested in obtaining additional information about; or perhaps you would like to become an expert in a particular treatment protocol.

Being able to find information via PubMed Central is going to give us an additional resource in addition to what we know so far. With PMC, we may be able to locate both general and widely used information, as well as specific, special information.

There are a few terminologies from the video that we first need to understand. We all have heard about RCTs, or *randomized control trials*. We may also have heard about *case studies*. These are forms of clinical studies that are published in medical journals. There are other forms, but let's stick with these for now.

Randomized control trials are standardized, well-known research procedures that follow strictly established protocols and guidelines. With RCTs, you may be able to find more information for a more general population. Case reports may have more appeal to you since they provide more specific and interesting information. Case reports usually focus on one or a few patients, with detailed descriptions of the treatment processes that were followed for the patient(s).

Editor's Note: Drs. Choi and Suh continue their discussion of how to find and utilize relevant research in your clinical practice in the March 2021 issue. This is the third article in an ongoing series by the authors on evidence-based medicine; previous articles appeared in the [March 2020](#) and [June 2020](#) issues.

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