

PRACTICAL, STATE-OF-THE ART MEDICAL TRAINING

The School of Medicine at the University of Adelaide aims to attract and retain the most intellectually able and most caring students, and produce excellent graduates. Over the last 15 years, the Faculty has devoted considerable time to reviewing the requirements of graduates, to develop the most effective styles of learning and teaching. Part of the resulting strategy is a more practical evidence-based learning style adopted right from the start of each course. As part of its innovative approach to learning, the University took out a subscription for *Best Practice* in 2009 to provide medical students with online support for all aspects of medicine and surgery.

Quick guidance and deeper study

Best Practice was adopted because it included *Clinical Evidence* (an established source of systematic reviews) and because it could be used anywhere, not just on campus. Angus Upton, Senior Education Coordinator for the Adelaide Medical Student Society explains: "We immediately recognised the value of *Best Practice* as a resource because it provides summaries for students on the wards and provides detailed evidence-based material for students studying from home. It is used regularly by clinical students because it provides comprehensive coverage of material encountered in obstetrics, gynaecology and paediatrics, which are considered to be challenging rotations in our program."

"To learn anything on a clinical rotation one needs to see patients with the literature and evidence base as a context. Best Practice helps to link the two together. Its structure and convenience of access makes it unique as a decision-support resource."

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A further benefit to students is that *Best Practice* can be linked with local hospital guidelines and resources. Angus explains: "It is convenient that *Best Practice* can be linked to the guidelines of our local hospitals. Through *Best Practice* we added a link to the South Australian Perinatal Practice Guidelines (SAPPG). This

is a local online resource outlining current trends in the practice of obstetrics in our Women's and Children's Hospital and hence is important for any student attending this hospital."

Features that support learning

Best Practice has been made available to medical students through their medical student society website or through the university library, and has proved very popular. Mick Draper, one of the medical Research Librarians has received some positive feedback from students about *Best Practice*: "Those students I have spoken to say that *Best Practice* is easy to use and very useful when writing assignments, providing basic information on an increasing range of conditions."

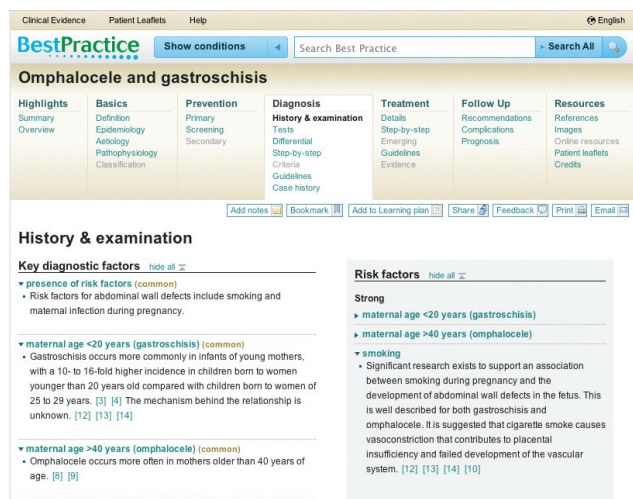
Best Practice is designed with medical practitioners in mind, so for qualified doctors it can be used as an *aide memoir* or to find the most recent evidence. For students it can help consolidate what is being taught and marry this up with what they are seeing on the wards during clinical rotation. Angus describes how this works in practice: "Fluid resuscitation is a topic that is confusing to medical students at my level. The concepts are sometimes difficult and management varies based on the specific clinical situation, such as dehydration, age, haemorrhage and abdominal surgery. On my surgery rotation we had an extensive discussion with the registrar about fluid balance, and by reading the topic in *Best Practice* called 'Volume depletion in adults', I was able to consolidate in my mind some of the points that had been discussed. I was then more informed and more confident when the topic was discussed again the following day in the context of a patient."

Angus goes on to explain some of the additional benefits *Best Practice* has provided during his clinical rotations: "Personally,

The screenshot shows the Best Practice website interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for 'Clinical Evidence', 'Patient Leaflets', and 'Help'. A search bar contains the text 'Search Best Practice'. Below the search bar, the main heading is 'Volume depletion in adults'. The page is organized into several columns: 'Highlights' (Summary, Overview), 'Basics' (Definition, Epidemiology, Aetiology, Pathophysiology, Classification), 'Prevention' (Primary, Screening, Secondary), 'Diagnosis' (History & examination, Tests, Differential, Step-by-step, Criteria, Guidelines, Case history), 'Treatment' (Details, Step-by-step, Emerging, Guidelines, Evidence), 'Follow Up' (Recommendations, Complications, Prognosis), and 'Resources' (References, Images, Online resources, Patient leaflets, Credits). Below these columns, there are sections for 'History & exam', 'Diagnostic tests' (1st tests to order, Acute), and 'Treatment details' (haemorrhagic losses, moderate: SBP >100 mmHg, pulse >100 bpm, light-headedness, active bleeding, severe: SBP >100 mmHg, pulse >100 bpm, light-headedness, active bleeding). At the bottom, there are sections for 'Other diagnostic factors' and 'Tests to consider'.

what I like about *Best Practice* is the explanations that are provided in the 'History and Examination' section. Within this section, it not only states what is important but also describes why these features are important. The careful deconstruction of clinical information in *Best Practice* is useful for correlating ward experiences with the current literature and evidence. In fact, after reading the segment in *Best Practice* on Henoch-Schonlein purpura (HSP), I was subsequently better able to understand the management of one of our in-patients and fully grasp the conditions surrounding this patient's admission into hospital."

Angus also appreciates the explanation of signs and symptoms, saying: "It gives the key clinical features in order of importance and an explanation or mechanism of how it arises. This is useful for understanding conditions at the undergraduate level."



A mine of information at your fingertips

In his role as Research Librarian, Mick has noted that students also find *Best Practice* a useful tool for navigating the huge volumes of research material. He comments: "I like the way the information is clearly set out. The links to evidence are helpful because finding evidence from multiple sources would take most students quite a while. I think that for most students finding evidence from databases is quite a challenge because they aren't always good at devising search strategies."

Best Practice enables students and practitioners to access a vast amount of information quickly and easily, providing the decision support they need, when they need it.

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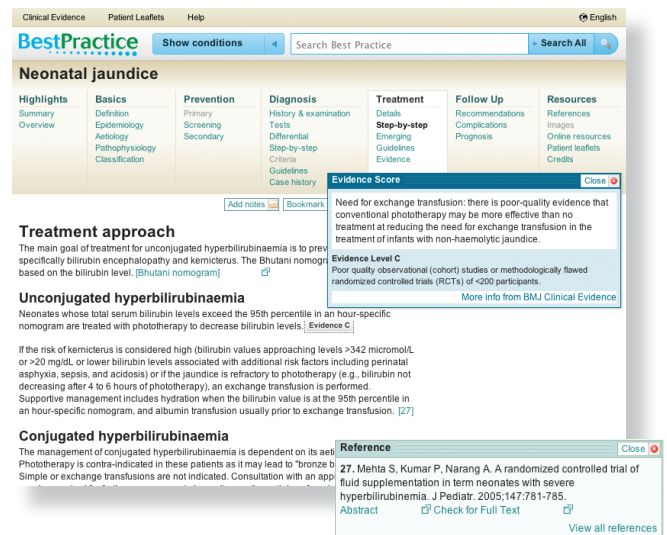
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Appreciated

Angus comments on why this is particularly valuable: "*Best Practice* is quick and easy to use and this is beneficial when your team is looking after twenty patients and a good understanding of each of them is required. To learn anything on a clinical rotation, one needs to see patients with the literature and evidence base as a context. *Best Practice* helps to link the two together. Its structure and convenience of access makes it unique as a decision-support resource."

He adds: "I refer to *Best Practice* at least every second day. I access it when I am studying from home and I access it from the hospital when I want to quickly refresh my knowledge of a clinical condition. I am yet to encounter a condition that does not feature in *Best Practice* and each topic is deconstructed in such a way that is useful for student learning."

As a medical school that has adopted evidence-based learning, *Best Practice* is the ideal tool for students and lecturers alike. Angus finishes by saying: "*Best Practice* is an excellent online resource and as the Senior Education Representative for our medical society I try and promote it to all our students."



Find out more

For more information about setting up a trial, or licensing *Best Practice* in your institution, please contact our sales team email: consortiasales@bmjgroup.com or telephone: +44 (0)20 7383 6693.