

# Understandings of and experiences with evidence-based practice in practice

Nina Halberg<sup>1,2</sup>, Ph.D.-student, MA, RN, Lone Assafi<sup>1</sup>, MA.

<sup>1</sup>Research unit of orthopedic nursing, Department of Orthopedic Surgery, Amager & Hvidovre Hospital, Denmark

<sup>2</sup>Roskilde University, Department of People and Technology, Roskilde, Denmark

## Background

The gap between theory and practice is well-known. Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) is a way of closing this gap. The primary purpose of EBP is high-quality patient outcomes.

EBP derives from evidence-based medicine (EBM). To include a broader health care perspective, the term was expanded and named evidence-based practice. Definitions differ but expertise, patient, evidence and context are widely accepted as the central elements in constructing an environment with EBP. Implementing EBP is complex, and barriers are well-described. Nonetheless, there is a lack of knowledge relating to the nurses' construction of the concept in a practice-based context.

## Aim

Evidence-Based Practice contains a large area of research within nursing and the outcomes are well-documented but prior to implementing EBP it is relevant to explore how nurses in practice understand and experience the concept of EBP.

## Method

- A constructivist framework
- 10 semi-structured interviews: six focus groups and four individual interviews
- 26 nurses including both managers, specialized nurses and basic nurses
- Written and oral consents were obtained
- Duration of interviews was between 21:51-92:28 mins.
- Conducted June 2019
- Data was digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim
- The data was analyzed with an emic and inductive approach

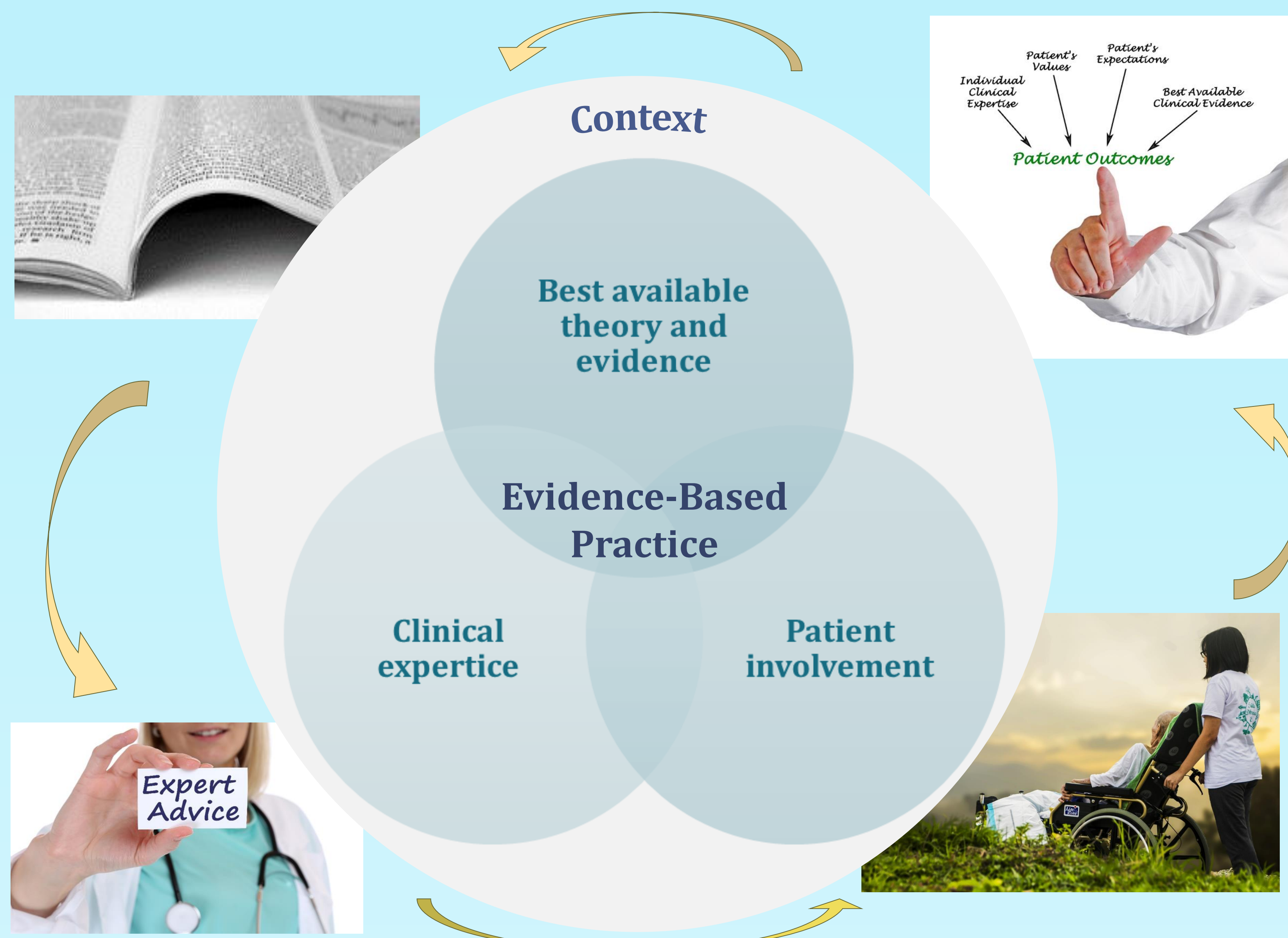
Data material	9,7 hours
Average age	49 years (28-61 years)
Average employment in department	15 years (1½-35 years)



## Conclusion

This study indicates a complexity relating to the construction of evidence-based practice among nurses in practice. The dominating discourse points towards an imprint of the hierarchy of evidence that can ultimately inhibit the nursing care as large randomized studies do not encompass the nursing field. Nonetheless, the nurses are continuously doing evidence-based practice described in other terms. There is a basis for working according to EBP but talking *of* EBP and working *with* EBP requires a common understanding both encompassing of the nursing field as well as including all central factors from the definition.

For a thorough description and analysis, see our published results: Halberg, N., Assafi, L., & Nørholm, V. (2021). Understandings of and experiences with evidence-based practice in practice among nurses in a surgical department: A constructivist approach. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 30(3-4), 488-498. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.15563>



## Results

### Understandings of EBP

While the literature describes EBP moving away from the evidence-based medicine and towards a nursing-based understanding, the nurses in this study describe an understanding of EBP founded in medical research evidence. With this follows an impact of the hierarchy of evidence and 'hardcore research'. Opposite is 'doing as usual' which describes the non-evident. The consequence is a concept perceived to be unattainable and unachievable.

"Evidence-based practice is hardcore research knowledge which is all those randomized trials" (N24)

"Is there evidence for what we do? Or do we do it because that's what 'we usually do'" (N5)

"(...) that there is evidence in the practice you carry out... in the care... That.. yes how to explain it [EBP], I find it an idiotic term.. I think people have a hard time describing what it is" (N7)

### Doing EBP

However, even though the nurses did not necessarily use the term EBP, they *did* EBP which is described through gains from nursing-based projects as well as evidence-based discussions and reflections during weekly meetings.

"I know the term [EBP] but I haven't worked with it" [later in interview] "There are a lot of things we do and ask 'is there evidence for what we do' or 'could this be done in a different manner' and then someone will try to examine it" (N19)

### Discrepancies of EBP

Barriers of lack of time, workload, interest, accessibility, language and knowledge were emphasized as well as barriers relating to the complexity of understanding the theoretical concept of EBP.

"I think it is the English that knock people out" (N14)

"Well some are more curious than others" (N2)

"In general I find it difficult to find evidence because it [research literature] is situated strangely far away from us.. First you go to the Royal Library, then you need a login and then up to 90% of us will quit" (N4)

## Implications for practice

- EBP is described as a complex concept based on the hierarchy of evidence and a lack of a common frame of understanding within nursing
- The consequence is a concept originally trying to close the gap between theory and practice end up increasing this gap by being understood as an unattainable and unachievable concept
- Despite EBP often not being verbalized in practice, the nurses *do* EBP described in other terms
- To consciously work according to EBP, it is essential to define a common and achievable understanding of EBP which increasingly is based on the nursing field