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CONFERENCE REVIEW

Evidence 2010: British Medical Association London, November 1-2, 2010

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One of the most significant challenges facing the continued development of prehospital emergency care is that of utilising evidence to support practice. As a primary theme of my PhD candidature at Monash University Department of Community Emergency Health and Paramedic Practice (DCEHPP), I was intrigued by the opportunity to engage in experiential learning through a conference attendance specifically targeted toward Evidence Based Medicine (EBM). This paper is a synopsis of that experience, and provides an overview of the conference in general.

Submitting an abstract for consideration by the scientific committee of Evidence 2010 (or any other appropriate platform for displaying research) is something that I would encourage all paramedics engaged in research to do, and I was not at all disappointed that on this occasion my work was not selected. However, the application process and feedback provided by the committee has provided me with a valuable set of tools from which to make future selection more likely. Taking steps to present work conducted by paramedics (as part of higher degree study or not) at conference level provides opportunities for professional development, and enables paramedics to demonstrate to a global audience our capabilities and professionalism.

The Evidence 2010 conference represented a prestigious gathering of health care professionals, health system operators and research professionals from across the globe. The conference venue, British Medical House (in Tavistock Square, London), is home to the British Medical Association (BMA) and notable international peer-reviewed journals such as the British Medical Journal (BMJ). This imposing three storey building, with its Victorian styling, grand entrance (complete with huge iron gates), courtyard fountain and lawn area, and maze of corridors and rooms echoing with centuries of medical study, remains a functional part of the daily operations of the BMA. It resides in a leafy area adjacent to the sprawling University of London campus with its own collection of cobbled streets and historical buildings.

The theme of the Evidence 2010 conference was “*Transforming Healthcare*”, and this was supported by eminent keynote speakers including Fiona Godlee (Editor in Chief, BMJ) and Carl Heneghan (Director of the Centre for Evidence Based Medicine at the University of Oxford) who spoke of the nature of evidence in medicine today. Other keynotes were from Jim Easton (NHS Director of Improvement and Efficiency), Sir Muir Gray (NHS Chief Knowledge Officer and Director of Oxford University Centre for Healthcare Transformation), Dr Victor Montori (Mayo Clinic, USA) and Professor Paul Glasziou (Centre for Research in Evidence Based Practice, Bond University, Australia). Accompanying these speakers was a plethora of presentations from global experts on EBM, whose sessions were grouped into

three specific areas of Evidence, Implementation, and Transforming Healthcare. There was also a research showcase, where researchers from across the world could present the findings of their work, and a poster area where it was possible to pause and view research material over coffee.

There were a very limited selection of sponsors present at the event, and this was somewhat disappointing from a personal perspective, as I had hoped to be drowning in available literature and products related to EBM. The few stands on offer represented software packages for managing EBM within the hospital environment (in essence, a variety of forms of software-based clinical practice guidelines and data collection/sharing programs) and a few stands linking researchers to subscriber based data bases, with a notable absence of people wanting or able to discuss the principles, frameworks or practice of EBM. I had the opportunity to talk with representatives of Dell, who were very helpful in describing their new system of integrated data sharing (hospital based), which enables everyone, from the admitting nurse, to the consultant, with access to the latest patient data. This appears to be quite an effective method of protecting patient data, and offering continuity of care with up to date records availability.

I was able to make up for the paucity of sponsor stands by chatting with some of my fellow attendees from around the world, and here found a rich source of knowledge from which to discuss the nature of EBM, and to create a network of contacts for the future. To compensate for the lack of available literature and guidance in EBM at the conference, I found myself wandering the nearby streets of the university campus, where I was able to locate and purchase a selection of quality texts necessary to furthering my understanding of this area. Unfortunately I was also suffering from a lack of quality caffeine (and pining for the cafes of Fitzroy and Carlton, back in Melbourne), and for the entire week was unable to source a single decent cup of coffee.

As there was limited ability to attend all of the sessions on offer (and the initial booking required registering at specific sessions), the coffee breaks between sessions enabled me to gain some valuable feedback from those others who had been attending other sessions, and to talk to some of the presenters about their projects. This informal atmosphere (with copious quantities of the obligatory coffee and biscuits) was a refreshing way to meet other health research professionals from around the world (notably Canada, Spain, Italy, Germany and the UK), whilst also being able to discuss the evolving research capabilities of paramedics in Melbourne.

Although my time in London was brief, the experience has enabled me to grow, both personally and professionally. I would also like to believe that I have been able to benefit others within the paramedic fraternity by demonstrating that there are no limits to where we can learn (and reciprocate learning) to improve our own craft.

For further information on the Evidence 2010 conference program and poster presentations, please visit: <http://www.evidence2010.com>