

EBVM Toolkit 5

Is this paper worth my time?

There are five key steps to follow in Evidence-based Veterinary Medicine (EBVM).

1. Asking an answerable clinical question
2. Finding the best available evidence to answer the question
- 3. Critically appraising the evidence for validity**
4. Applying the results to clinical practice
5. Evaluating performance

In veterinary medicine many papers are published each week and it would be impossible to read them all. By defining your clinical question using the PICO method and using that as the basis of your search strategy you will have reduced the number of papers that you will need to read.

You can screen the papers further by considering the following questions before carrying out a full critical appraisal. To answer the questions you will not need to read the whole paper instead you can focus on the sections indicated.

1. Does the paper address your clinical question?

Look at the paper's **Introduction** to see if the research question being asked in the paper is relevant to your clinical question e.g. *is the population of the study similar to your patient?* Be wary of relying on the title and abstract because these do not always reflect the content of the paper.

2. Does the paper address your clinical question?

Consult the **Methodology** or **Methods** section of the paper for information about the study design. Different types of study provide different types of evidence (see [EBVM Toolkits 3 and 4](#) for more information on study design). This means that your question will best be answered by a particular type of study e.g. A Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) is the most appropriate study for answering questions about the efficacy of interventions.

Next step

If the paper addresses your clinical question and the study is designed appropriately, then you will need to critically appraise the quality of the study. [EBVM Toolkits 6-15](#) provide checklists for the different types of study to help you do this.

Further reading

Dean, R. (2013) How to read a paper and appraise the evidence. *In Practice*, 35 (5), pp. 282-285.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1136/inp.f1760>

Greenhalgh, T. (2014) *How to read a paper: The basics of evidence-based medicine*. 5th ed. Wiley Blackwell

EBVM Toolkit 5: Is this paper worth my time? by [RCVS Knowledge](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](#).

We welcome comments and suggestions for improvement to this guide.

Please email ebvm@rcvsknowledge.org