



Application of evidence-based nutrition and its limitations

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Abstract:

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Evidence-based medicine (EBM) aims to rationalize the medical decision-making process by taking into account, mainly, the results of controlled randomized clinical trials (RCTs), which provide the highest level of evidence. However, certain features of RCTs seem ill-suited to the nutrition field. Although RCTs present one approach toward understanding the efficacy of nutrient interventions, the innate complexities of nutrient actions and interactions can not always be adequately addressed through any single research design. Because of the limitations inherent in RCTs, particularly of nutrients, it is suggested that nutrient policy decisions should be made using the totality of the best available evidence. This may mean action at a level of certainty that is different from what would be needed in the evaluation of drug efficacy. Meanwhile, there is an undeniable fact that due to gene-environment interactions in different populations, even the best evidence can not confidently be applied in all patients populations. In clinical practice, nutritionists often encounter gaps in their knowledge while providing care. For nutritionists working in developing countries such as Iran, it is crucial to emphasize that most of their knowledge are based on realities and characteristics of populations in developed countries. In brief, advancing evidence-based nutrition in our country will depend on research approaches that encompass all well-designed studies including RCTs on our own population. In this article, the application of these studies and their limitations will be discussed.

Keyword: Evidence-based medicine, randomized clinical trials, nutrition