

Evidence-based Palliative Care and Hospice

Can We Get There?



What is EBVM?



EBVM Elements

Explicit, conscientious, judicious
integration of

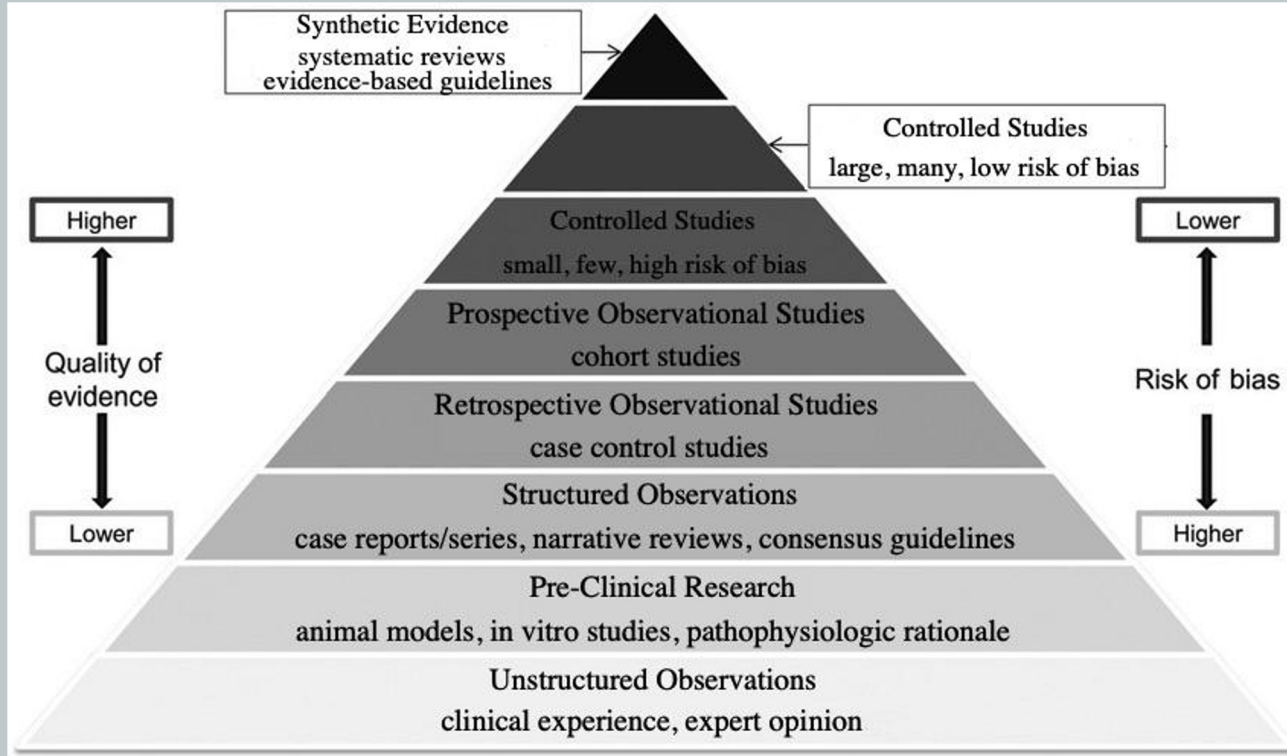
Scientific Evidence

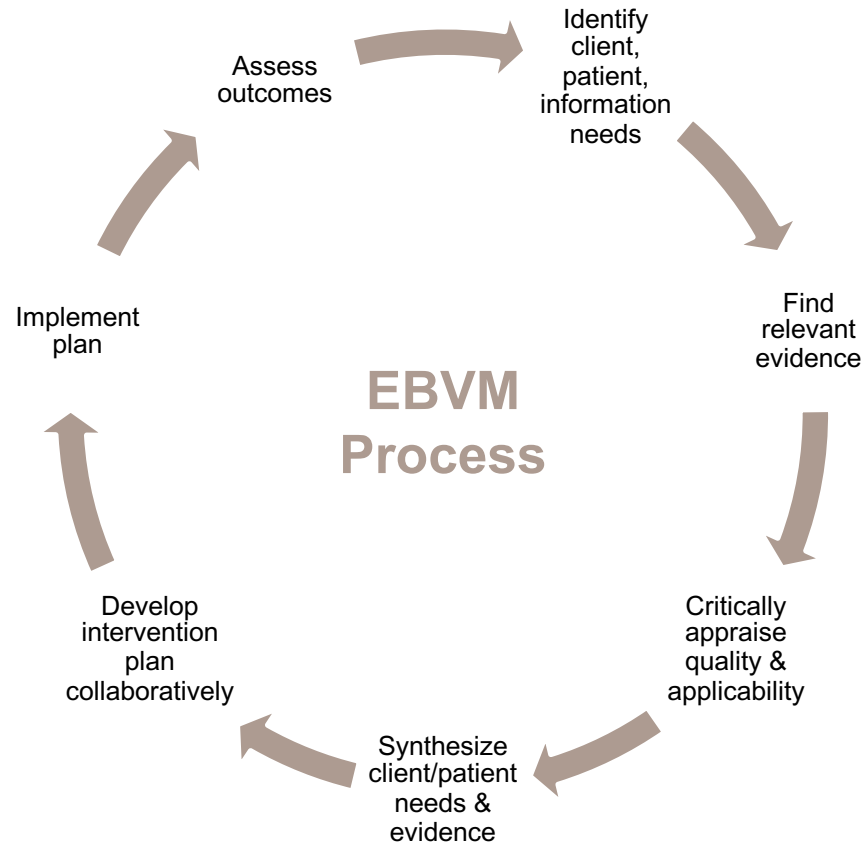
Clinical Expertise

Client Goals and Values



Some types of evidence are more reliable than others.





What EBVM Does



Reduces errors

Mistakes in 35-42% of cases

33% of deaths due to Dx error

50-96% of medical mistakes are decision errors

What EBVM Does

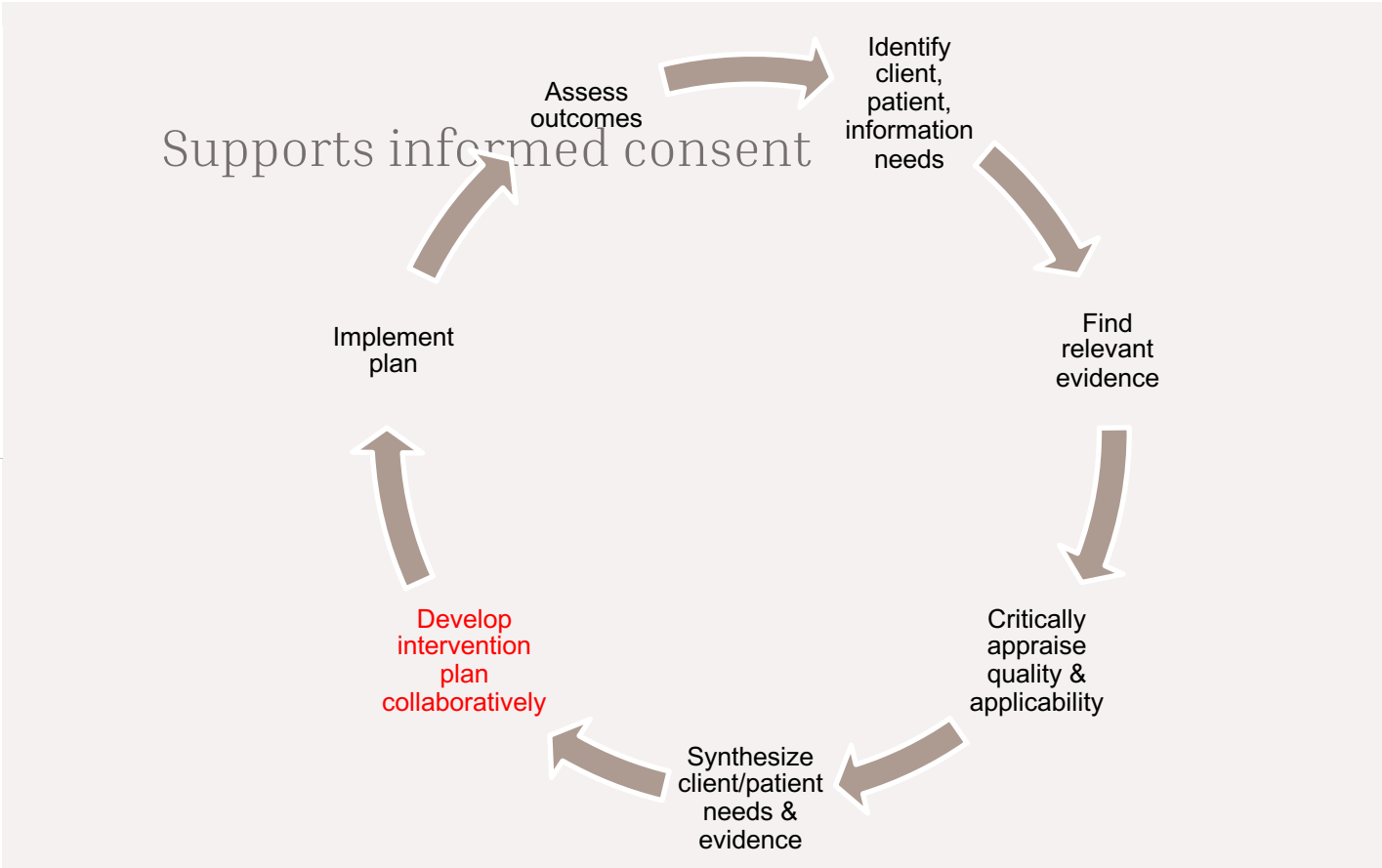


Improves patient care

Adherence to a protocol based on guidelines can result in a significant decrease in hospital days and charges.... In addition, mortality and outcome may be significantly affected.

Outcomes improve for patients, personnel, or organizations if clinical practice in health care is evidence-based.

What EBVM Does



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Respect for autonomy, as it applies to clients, is the obligation of the veterinary medical professional to disclose the information needed for a client to make the best decision on behalf of their pet .



What EBVM Does Not Do



Make decisions for you

Replace clinical judgement

Provide all the answers

Ignore individuality

Answer philosophical/spiritual questions

What is Palliative Care?



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*Relieving or soothing the
symptoms of a disease at any
stage of an illness*



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Treatment that supports or improves the quality of life (QOL) for patients and caregivers by relieving suffering



Palliative Care

Reduces suffering

Applicable to curable or incurable conditions

Most commonly targeting

Physical symptoms

Social needs

Emotional wellbeing

What is Animal Hospice?



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Philosophy or program of care that addresses the physical, emotional, and social needs of animals in the advanced stages of a progressive, life-limiting illness or disability



Animal Hospice

Provide palliative care not only for the imminently dying, but also for patients for whom a cure is no longer possible and whose condition has become advanced, progressive, and incurable

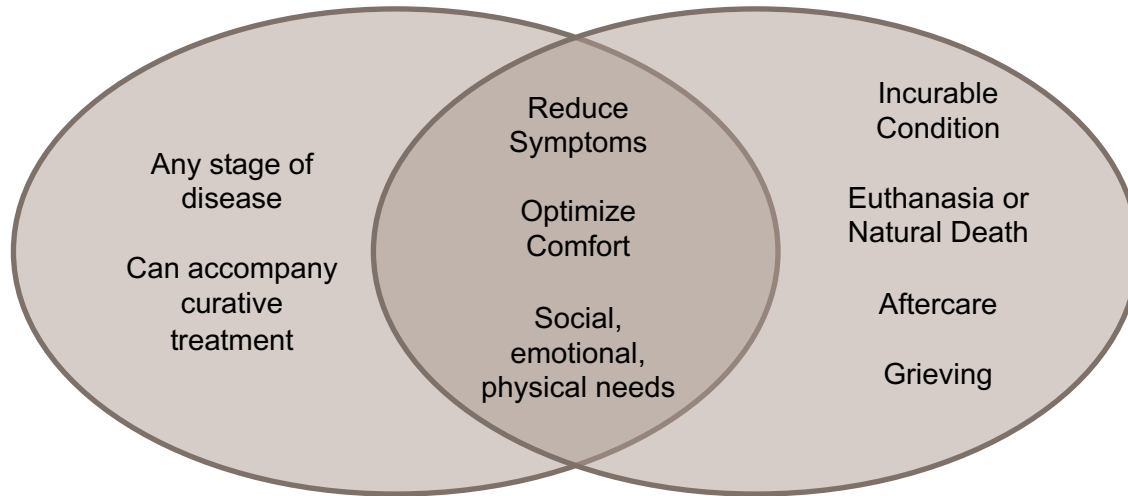
Give patients and caregivers control, dignity, and comfort during the time they have remaining to live

Offer spiritual support to patients and accommodates beliefs about death and about afterlife as much as possible. It also provides spiritual and grief support for caregivers

Including hospice-supported natural death as well as euthanasia.

Palliative Care

Animal Hospice



Evidence-based Palliative & Hospice Care



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Veterinarians must base their decisions and actions on the best available scientific evidence, in conjunction with their own expertise, knowledge, and experience.



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Evidence-based research to support this rapidly evolving field is also necessary



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The fields of animal hospice and palliative care are still in the early stages of development and these guidelines will require revision as evidence-based knowledge advances



Barriers to Evidence- based Palliative & Hospice Care



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Lack of Evidence

Too little evidence

Poor quality evidence

Not applicable



Lack of Evidence

Resources

Seeing the need

Willingness to participate

Culture & Philosophy



EBM- Limited Utility

Ethical issues

Spiritual issues

Ethics of euthanasia vs natural death

Value conflicts between caregivers and veterinarians

Balance between caregiver and patient interests

Education vs Influence vs Coercion

Role of spiritual beliefs in care

EBM- High Utility



Evaluating Treatments

Specific therapies

Risks & benefits

Hospice and palliative
protocols

Assessment Tools

Pain

Suffering

Quality of life

Attitudes & beliefs

The Problem of CAVM

A decorative rectangular image on the right side of the slide. It features a dark, muted brown background. In the center, there is a large, white, serif number '6'. Behind the number, several stalks of dried reeds or grasses are visible, their heads slightly out of focus, adding a natural, textured element to the design.

6

What is CAVM?

Defined in opposition

Not “mainstream,” “conventional,”
“science-based”

Defined philosophically

“holistic,” “natural,” “mind-body-spirit”

Defined by example

acupuncture, homeopathy, TCVM, etc.

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It is important to consider integration [of CAVM], where appropriate, into animal hospice and palliative care.



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An integrative approach, using conventional and CAVM therapies, is recommended



CAVM is Controversial

Efficacy often unproven

Safety often untested

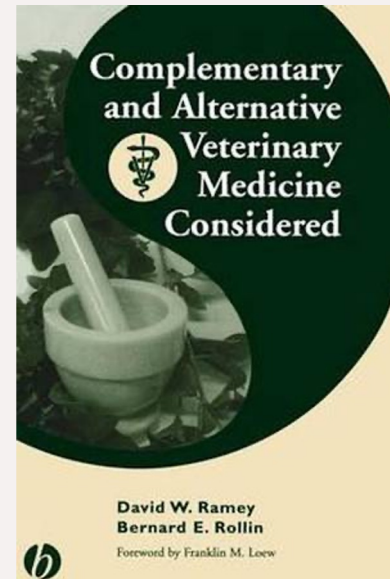
> [J Am Vet Med Assoc.](#) 2012 Aug 15;241(4):421-6. doi: 10.2460/javma.241.4.421.

Is complementary and alternative medicine compatible with evidence-based medicine?

[Brennen A McKenzie](#) ¹

Affiliations + expand

PMID: 22852564 DOI: [10.2460/javma.241.4.421](#)



What are your beliefs and practices on these complementary & alternative medicine (CAM) modalities? Choose all that apply:

I believe homeopathy is effective for certain conditions

16.36%

I believe in and practice (or refer patients for) homeopathic treatments

4.27%

I believe acupuncture is effective for certain conditions

63.43%

I believe in and practice (or refer patients for) acupuncture treatments

31.69%

I believe Reiki is effective for certain conditions

3%

I believe in and practice (or refer patients for) Reiki treatments

0.98%

I believe chiropractic is effective for certain conditions

32.86%

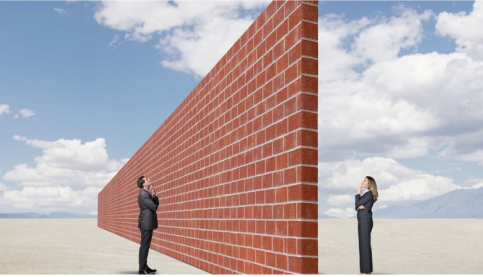
I believe in and practice (or refer patients for) chiropractic treatments

13.41%

None of these options are supported by enough scientific evidence for me to include them in my practice

25.6%

CAVM & Palliative or Hospice Care

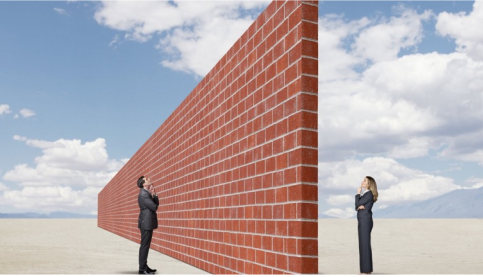


Limited Scientific Evidence

Practical and ethical challenges of conducting high-quality research in patients with terminal conditions

Misperception that the risk of using therapies with inadequate evidence for safety and efficacy are lower in patients with terminal conditions than in patients we hope to cure

CAVM & Palliative or Hospice Care

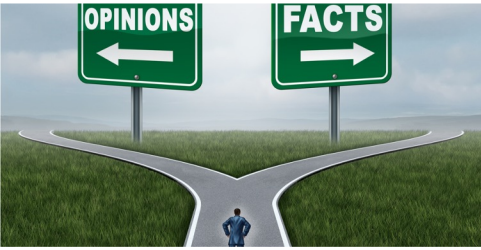


Limited Scientific Evidence

The influence of the personal beliefs and experiences of the relatively small number of individuals involved in developing and promoting animal hospice

The culture of the hospice movement, which emphasizes the primacy of individual experiences and beliefs and the centrality of spiritual considerations

CAVM & Palliative or Hospice Care



Why is this a Problem?

Ineffective care doesn't benefit patients

Inaccurate information doesn't support informed consent

Experience & belief are unreliable evidence

CAVM & Hospice



Titan, 10 year-old MN Rottweiler

OSA Right front humerus

Owner declined conventional treatment and did not “believe” in euthanasia

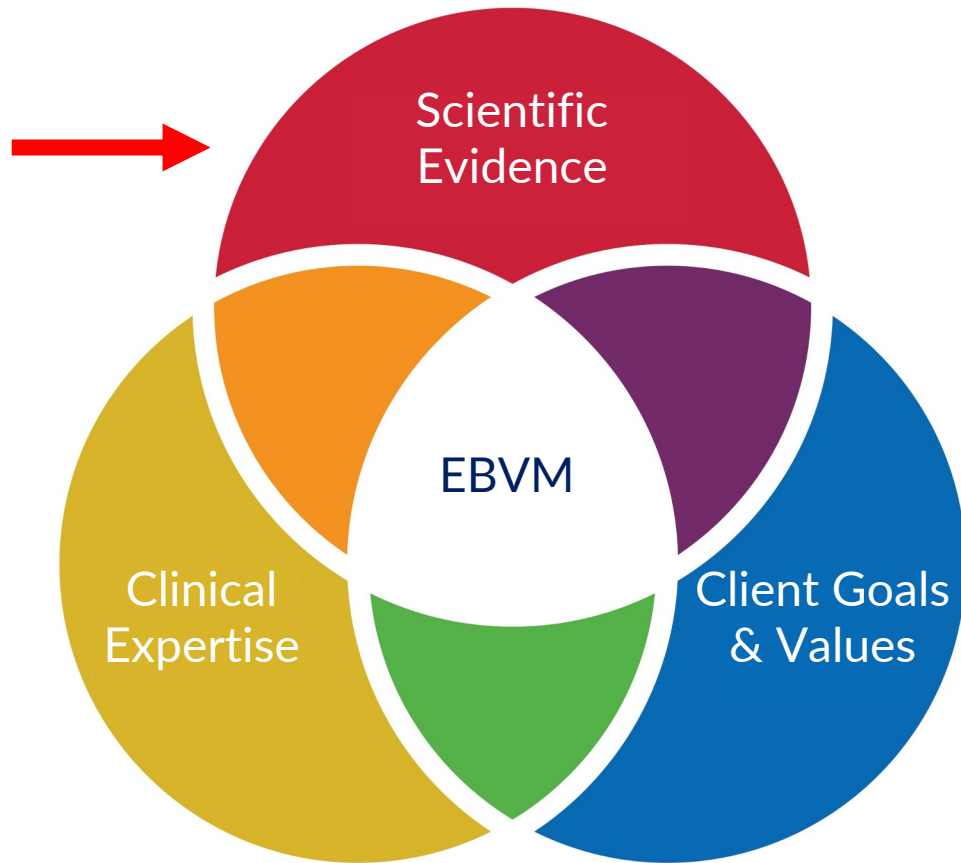
TCVM and homeopathy

Declined conventional analgesia, “He is not in pain”

The Way Forward



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The Way Forward



Continued recognition of the need for more and better-quality evidence to support palliative and hospice care practices

Improved understanding of the strengths and limitations of different types of evidence and the need to proportion our confidence in specific interventions or beliefs to the strength of the available evidence

Creativity and persistence in the generation of reliable scientific research evidence within the limitations of the palliative and hospice care context

Inclusion of a greater variety of perspectives and world views in establishing guidelines and training for hospice providers to maximize the value of these resources for the broadest possible population of veterinary professionals and animal caregivers

Willingness to change and abandon specific practices based on the best available evidence