

Evidence-Informed Practice

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INTRODUCTION

The College of Licensed Practical Nurses and Health Care Aides of Alberta (CLHA) has the **authority** under the *Health Professions Act* (HPA) to carry out its activities and **govern** the practice of Health Care Aides (HCAs)* in a manner that protects and serves the public interest. CLHA also regulates the practice of Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs).

Terms found in the definition section are **bolded** where they appear for the first time in this document.

Evidence-informed practice in healthcare means using the best **research** findings to guide clinical decisions. It also means using one's practical experience, understanding **client** needs, respecting **client preferences**, and considering available resources to provide safe, effective, and personalized care.¹

HCAs **collaborate** with clients, their families, supervisors, and other healthcare team members to ensure that clients receive safe and effective care. They can advocate for their clients' needs to improve the quality of care they provide.

HCAs are responsible for their actions and the care they provide to clients, even when a healthcare professional assigns them tasks like **activities of daily living**.²

PURPOSE

This info sheet provides HCAs with information to gain an understanding of evidence-informed practice. It explains that, while healthcare professionals use research to guide their decisions, they also collaborate with other healthcare team members, including HCAs. Healthcare professionals will consider the client's needs, the work environment, and use their **professional judgment** to develop a treatment plan.

For HCAs, it also highlights the importance of providing **ethical care** while learning new skills, knowing what to observe and report, and understanding what tasks they are allowed to do within their scope of practice.

* "In this document, "Health Care Aides (HCAs)" has the same meaning as "regulated member(s)" in the *Health Professions Act*".

DISCUSSION OF EVIDENCE

The best source of evidence is the most updated, high-quality research. However, other types of **knowledge**, like hands-on experience and learning, are also important when making care decisions. To give the best care, it's important to focus on the client's needs and combine that with research, the work setting, and **professional experience**.

Healthcare professionals provide safe, skilled, and ethical care by staying informed about issues and trends in healthcare and society. They discuss and apply this knowledge to improve their practice.

Evidence-Informed Practice

Evidence-informed practice means the healthcare team uses research findings, clinical knowledge, client preferences, and other factors like the healthcare environment (see below) to make decisions in practice.³ According to the *Standards of Practice for Health Care Aides in Alberta*, HCAs carry out a client's care plan within their defined role and collaborate with other healthcare professionals while still meeting regulatory and employer requirements.

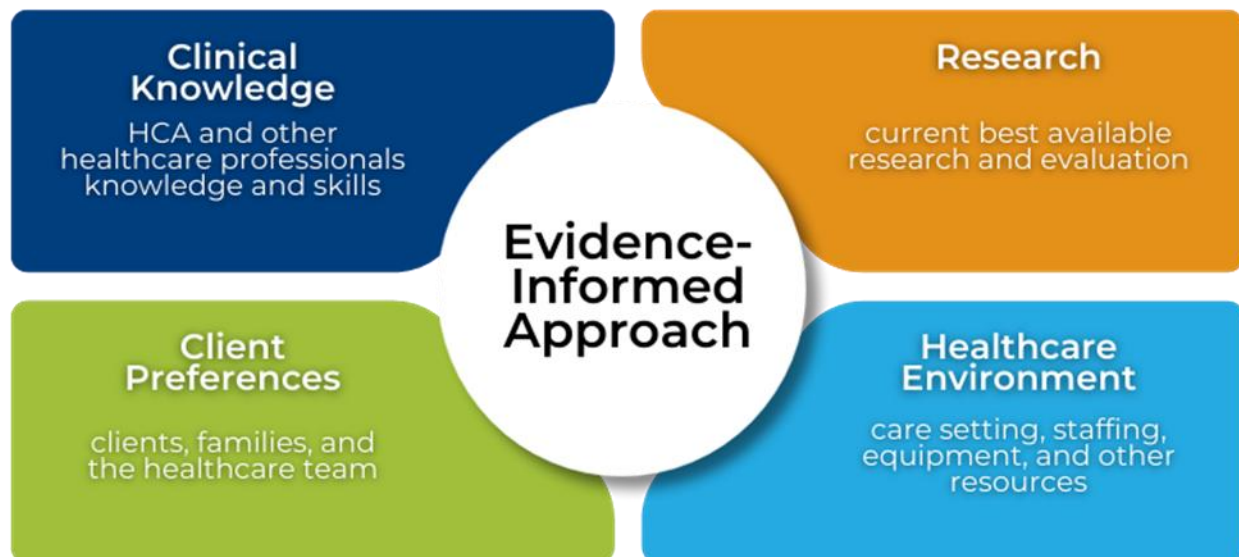


Figure 1 Evidence-informed approach

Research Evidence

Research evidence provides important information and data from scientific studies. The healthcare team uses this information to make decisions in care settings.⁴ Research evidence comes from various sources, which include, but are not limited to:

- **reliable** sources: studies from **peer-reviewed** journals and **systematic reviews** that are most up to date and based on many sources.
- less reliable sources: reports, online posts, or notes that have not been peer-reviewed by experts.

Evidence-informed practice involves the healthcare team using research evidence and other resources to improve client care.

Clinical Knowledge

Clinical knowledge is the understanding and skills that healthcare workers gain through school, training, and real-life experience. For HCAs, this means knowing what is normal or not for each client by:

- observing clients closely and reporting their responses to various treatments and/or changes in their health status, and
- knowing the care environment and talking with the healthcare team about what may or may not be possible.

HCAs play a vital role in carrying out care tasks. To do this safely, they should keep their knowledge and skills up to date.

Client Preferences

Client preferences mean giving care that meets what the client needs or wants. HCAs use their clinical knowledge and work closely with other healthcare professionals to provide care that fits each client. To make informed decisions about the client's care, HCAs:

- observe and report how clients respond to care,
- speak up for what clients want, and
- share client values and preferences with supervisors and the healthcare team.

The best care is based not only on strong evidence but also on what works best for each client.

Healthcare Environment

The healthcare environment includes the place where care is given, the staff, equipment, and other physical parts of the setting. It is important for HCAs to understand how this environment can affect the healthcare team's decisions when using evidence to guide care.

Integrating Evidence into Practice

Observe and Report

HCAs can make decisions within their role by observing any changes in clients and reporting them while following the care plan. They often work closely with nurses and other healthcare

professionals. HCAs support evidence-informed care by observing and reporting helpful information to the healthcare team. Using evidence in care ensures clients get the best care possible.

Ethical Practice

Ethical practice means providing **compassionate, respectful**, and person-centered care while following professional standards, such as treating everyone with **dignity**, promoting clients' well-being, and avoiding harm. Sometimes, different types of evidence may suggest different actions. When this happens, HCAs need to think carefully, stay focused on the client's best interest, follow the care plan, and report their observations to supervisors and the healthcare team to help make safe and informed decisions.

Collaborative Practice

HCAs work with other health professionals to support clients. When working in a team, HCAs should understand all team members' roles, responsibilities, and skills and respect their contributions. HCAs should communicate respectfully, share findings, offer support, and take part in shared decision-making to improve client care.

Education and Training

HCAs should look for ways to keep their skills up to date, such as attending training from their employer, workshops or courses, and participating in programs that help them build their skills. HCAs should also check information from the CLHA to understand their roles, professional standards, and responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

HCAs play an important role in providing care that is safe, effective, and tailored to each client. Evidence-informed practice recognizes that the most effective care is not only based on strong research but also on meeting each client's individual needs, values, and preferences. HCAs observe and report clients' needs while collaborating with healthcare professionals and other care team members who combine research, clinical knowledge, and the work environment to guide their care decisions.

They follow ethical principles, use good judgment, and work closely with clients, families, supervisors, and the healthcare team to support informed decisions. By observing, reporting, advocating, and staying up to date, HCAs help improve the overall quality of care.

Documents are updated frequently. For the most current version and access to related documents and resources, please visit the Knowledge Hub on clha.com.

If after reading this document you have questions, please contact the CLHA's Professional Practice Team via practice@clha.com or 780-484-8886 or 1-800-661-5877 (toll free in Alberta).

DEFINITIONS

Activities of daily living: as defined in the HPA, an activity that an individual normally performs on their own behalf to maintain their health and well-being.⁵ In other words, these are tasks that the client would complete for themselves if they were not hindered by a health condition.

Authority: refers to the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience. It can also mean the appropriate person to give orders or make decisions.

Client preferences: refer to what the client likes, dislikes, or prefers when receiving care. This includes their preferred treatments, the type of support they want, and how they wish to be involved in the decision-making about their health.

Client/Resident/Patient: an individual who receives a professional service from the HCA. The term client is interchangeable with patient and resident, depending on the work setting.

Collaborate: to work together with clients, their families, and other members of the healthcare team to determine and achieve a shared goal in the client's interest.

Compassionate: means HCAs recognize when a client is in pain or facing challenges and feel motivated to take action to assist them. It also means having empathy or real concern for clients, along with a desire to take action to address the client's needs.

Dignity: the right of a person to be valued and respected.

Ethical care: providing care to clients while upholding moral beliefs and values.

Evidence-informed: an action, decision, or process based on the most up-to-date research and knowledge rather than traditional methods, advice from colleagues, or personal beliefs.⁶

Govern: to lead, control, or manage an organization or group, often by creating rules and making decisions that guide their actions.

Knowledge: understanding of or information about a subject that you get by experience or study, known by one person or by people generally.

Peer-reviewed: the evaluation of work by one or more people.

Professional experience: refers to the knowledge and skills acquired through work in a specific field or profession.

Professional judgment: using professional knowledge to set goals, solve problems, review work, interpret results, and give advice for informed decisions.

Reliable: someone or something that can be trusted or believed because it works or behaves in the expected way.

Research: a detailed study of a subject, especially in order to discover new information or reach a new understanding.

Respectful: means treating clients and their families with dignity, considering their personal choices, and ensuring they have control over their own care while keeping their private information safe.

Systematic review: means gathering and combining all existing research on a specific topic to give a complete picture and ensure that the findings can be easily understood and repeated.

REFERENCES

¹ Canadian Nurses Association (CAN), *Evidence-Informed Decision-Making and Nursing Practice*, (2018), [Evidence-informed Decision-making and Nursing Practice position statement](#)

² Health Academy, *Navigating responsibilities- the vital role of HCAs in primary care*, (2024), [Navigating responsibilities- the vital role of HCAs in primary care - Health Academy](#)

³ Canadian Council for Practical Nurse Regulators, *Entry-Level Competencies for Licensed Practical Nurses*, (2019), [CCPNR-ELCs_2019E.pdf](#)

⁴ Jacalyn Kelly, Tara Sadeghieh and Khosrow Adeli, "Peer Review in Scientific Publications: Benefits, Critiques, & A Survival Guide," *The Journal of International Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Science* 25, no. 3 (2014): 227-243, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4975196/>.

⁵ Government of Alberta. *Health Professions Act*. [Alberta King's Printer::](#)

⁶ American Nurses Association. (2023). *What is Evidence-Based Practice in Nursing?* [What Is Evidence-Based Practice in Nursing? | ANA](#)