LEVELS OF EVIDENCE

Systematic Review (SR) or meta-analysis of all relevant RCTs or evidencebased clinical practice guidelines based on SR of RCTs Level II Evidence obtained from at least one well designed RCT

Level III

Evidence obtained from well-designed controlled trials without randomization

Level IV

Evidence from well-designed case-control and cohort studies

Level V

Evidence from systematic reviews of descriptive and qualitative studies

Level VI

Evidence from a single descriptive or qualitative study

Level VII

Evidence from the opinion of authorities and/or reports of expert committees

modified from Melnyk & Fineout-Overholt, 2005

Definitions

Systematic Review (SR) Summary of the evidence on a specific clinical topic based on a rigorous process for identifying, appraising, and synthesizing research studies to draw conclusions

Meta-Analysis Summary statistics on the effect of an intervention/treatment across multiple studies

Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) Subjects are randomly assigned to control (placebo or no treatment/intervention) and experimental (treatment or intervention) groups

Evidence-Based Practice Guideline Recommendations for practice from team of experts that is the outcome of an unbiased, exhaustive, and rigorous review of the best evidence on a specific topic

Non-Randomized Controlled Trial Differs from a RCT in that a nonrandom method is used to assign subjects to control and experimental groups, e.g. even/odd numbers, days of the week

Case Control Study Retrospective comparison of a subject with a condition (e.g. hypertension) with one who does not have the condition that is designed to identify variables that might predict the condition (e.g. stressful lifestyle, sodium intake)

Cohort Study Involves two groups of patients (cohorts), one exposed and one not exposed (e.g. to a disease) in which the cohorts are followed prospectively over time to tract outcomes

Descriptive Study Research aimed to describe characteristics of certain phenomena or selected variables

Qualitative Study Research that collects data in non-numeric form such as personal interviews