Table 2 Sites which collate critically appraised summaries (CATs)

Source	Notes
www.bestbets.org	UK collection of A&E summaries ("Best Evidence Topics", BETs)
www.pedsccm.org	US collection of paediatric critical care CATs
depts.washington.edu/pedebm/	US collection of exclusively paediatric CATs
www.ped.med.umich.edu/ebm/cat.htm	US collection of exclusively paediatric CATs
www.urmc.rochester.edu/medicine/res/CATS/index.html	US collection of paediatric and internal medicine CATs

searching Best Evidence too, but is a subscription access product. The search "pneumococcal meningitis and dexamethasone" provides a reference to the same review, but in a predigested format with clinical commentary attached (from Best Evidence).

The future

It is unrealistic to look for answers in clinical time in anything but these "preprocessed" formats. As hinted above, there are a selection of databases which back up the process—Cochrane, DARE, Best Evidence—and there are new projects developing such resources.

These developing knowledge banks contain easily digested summaries of the evidence, with the facility for more detailed investigation if time allows. The format used in many centres practising evidence based child health is the "critically appraised topic" (CAT). This is in effect a highly structured abstract, written independently, with commentaries on both methodological and clinical issues.

Evidence Based On Call (EBOC),⁸ a team from the Centre of Evidence Based Medicine (Oxford), has produced such a resource for general medicine, and is working on expanding this into paediatric practice. These CATs are independently verified by two researchers and reviewed by a clinician working in the appropriate field. There are also a number of sites in the USA and UK which have begun to collate such summaries (see table 2). Many

of these sites incorporate mechanisms by which practising clinicians can contribute to the emerging wealth of knowledge.⁹

The answer

The abstracted version of the meta-analysis convinces you to give intravenous dexamethasone with the antibiotic. The child is confirmed to have pneumococcal meningitis (penicillin sensitive) by microbiological testing, and is discharged home a fortnight later. There is an appointment with the local audiologist coming up—but no hearing test as yet.

R S PHILLIPS

Centre for Evidence Based Medicine,
John Radcliffe Hospital,
Oxford OX3 9DU, UK
bob.phillips@doctors.org.uk

- 1 <http://www.nelh.nhs.uk/background/knowledge.asp> (accessed 26/7/00).
- 2 Sackett DL, Straus SE, Richardson WS, Rosenberg W, Haynes RB. Chapter 7, Guidelines. In: *Evidence-based medicine: how to practise and teach EBM*, 2nd edn. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 2000.
- 3 <http://www.pier.shef.ac.uk> (accessed 26/7/00).
- 4 <http://www.evidence.org> (accessed 26/7/00).
- 5 <http://sumsearch.uthscsa.edu/searchform45.htm> (accessed 26/7/00).
- 6 <http://www.ovid.com/products/cip/ebmr.cfm> (accessed 26/7/00).
- 7 Muir Gray JA, de Lusignan S. National electronic Library for Health (NeLH). *BMJ* 1999;**319**:1476–9.
- 8 <http://www.eboncall.co.uk> (accessed 26/7/00).
- 9 Dawes M, Godwin M. Global medical knowledge database is proposed. *BMJ* 2000;**320**:1340.

STAMPS IN PAEDIATRICS

Hospitals and clinics

Most of the stamps with a paediatric or health interest are commemorative issues—that is, stamps which are released to mark a particular event and available for a short period of time (usually only months). Definitive stamps are stamps used routinely for postage and are available for long periods of time (often years) without design alteration. It is unusual to find a definitive stamp with a health interest. The 1/2d Bahamas stamp is one such example and shows the infant welfare clinic. This formed part of the island's definitive sets from 1948 to 1965. Originally issued in 1948 with the portrait of King George VI, it was the first value in the definitive set of 16 covering the cost of postage from 1/2d to £1. The design was changed in 1954 to the portrait of Queen Elizabeth II. The stamp appeared a third time

in 1964 when this definitive set was overprinted "New Constitution 1964" as illustrated here. The new definitives subsequently issued in 1965 did not include the infant welfare clinic.

M K DAVIES
A J MAYNE