Supporting clinicians in a world of dynamic medical knowledge

The case for current, reliable clinical information
Healthcare is more complex than ever. Growing challenges associated with the proliferation of chronic disease, higher acuity patients and a rapidly expanding aging population mean healthcare organizations need broad-based knowledge and expertise. The reality is that today’s clinicians, including specialists, frequently see patients with multiple comorbidities.

“60% of U.S. adults have a chronic disease, and 40% have two or more. Chronic disease is the leading driver of the nation’s $35 trillion cost of healthcare crisis.” *

Yet, allocating the resources needed for clinicians to stay in sync with the latest research is a non-starter for most organizations already operating within constrained margins.

Especially in a public health crisis, multi-disciplinary teams need access to the latest scientific findings and knowledge. While synoptic content consisting of clinical summaries of evidence-based information can be a powerful asset at the point of care, it falls short in some areas—including times of crisis.

In tandem with a complicated mix of patient conditions and treatments, scientific discovery and advancement is moving at a breakneck pace. In the age of value-based care, healthcare leaders know that closing the gap between new evidence and existing knowledge available at the point of care is critical to minimizing variation and advancing industry best practices for optimal quality outcomes.

When clinicians are faced with crisis situations or cases that involve rapidly developing medical conditions, they need “in the moment” access to relevant information. There is simply not enough time to wait weeks or even months for a large medical editorial board to reach a consensus and publish a synoptic content piece. Without access to a single source of expert information that delivers the latest guidance, there is a greater likelihood that clinical teams will turn to unvetted online sources when they need information—resources that may or may not be reputable or provide the most current guidance. These practices also open the door to care variability that can impact outcomes and costs.
A better approach exists that ensures more immediate access to the latest best practice information. While the provision of supporting summary content is one component of an optimal evidence-based care strategy, healthcare organizations must also recognize the critical role of providing multidisciplinary teams with instant access to the latest research and industry information.

**COVID-19: Keeping clinicians aligned with evolving guidance**

As the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the globe, immediate integration of emerging science into treatment protocols was, and remains, critical. Evidence and guidance for diagnosing and treating patients changed rapidly – sometimes daily and hourly.

These notable challenges put junior and senior clinicians on a level playing field. Clinicians’ fear and frustration over their lack of diagnostic confidence was evident in many institutions during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Clinicians at all levels – from seasoned physicians to newly graduated medical students – were thrust into the unprecedented healthcare crisis. There were no teachings to pass down the line. Each clinician had to learn and understand what was newly discovered, discuss it with peers and make treatment decisions based on the latest knowledge and evidence.

Consequently, healthcare organizations needed resources that immediately reflected the most reliable evidence to increase clinician confidence, minimize the potential for variability and promote optimal outcomes. While summary content can be useful to clinicians looking for information on well-established conditions, it was inadequate on its own to support the complexities and fluid nature of the pandemic.

The chart below reflects the number of search results for the term “COVID-19” in Elsevier’s ClinicalKey clinical knowledge solution during the first few weeks of the crisis.
Results grew significantly from the early days of the pandemic in the U.S. through the first couple of weeks; as patient populations increased and new research was published care guidance changed rapidly.

During the time frames reviewed, drug treatment recommendations morphed. On March 24, 2020, there was no specific antiviral agent approved for treatment of COVID-19. However, several existing agents such as hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine in combination with Azithromycin were under clinical trial and compassionate use protocols based upon in vitro activity. In just two weeks, emergency use authorization was granted for both hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine, and clinical trials were launched with Remdesivir, Lopinavir, Anakinra, and tocilizumab, as well as other treatment regimens such as convalescent plasma.

At the time of this publication, approximately six weeks later, recommendations have continued to evolve as new data emerges against the use of hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine as primary treatment therapies. Clinicians relying solely on synoptic content may miss key treatment updates like this.

Optimal clinical guidance for in-the-moment decision making

Today’s multi-disciplinary care teams need quick access to:

- comprehensive and trusted content sources covering a variety of medical specialties.
- a broad range of summary and in-depth clinical content to inform even the most challenging questions.
- simple, efficient, single-source access to minimize variability across clinical teams and health networks.
- convenient access from any device at any time.

The value proposition of supplementing summary content with the latest advances in clinical evidence cannot be overstated in today’s fast-paced, high acuity healthcare environments. Forward-thinking healthcare organizations are wise to consider ClinicalKey to support clinical practice through informed, confident decisions. ClinicalKey arms healthcare professionals with the right answers through a wide breadth and depth of trusted content across a variety of formats including reference books and journals, point-of-care monographs, drug information, videos, practice guidelines, customizable patient education handouts, clinical calculators and more.

Learn more at elsevier.com/clinicalkey

* https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/infographic/chronic-diseases.htm