

Explainer

Weighing the evidence: Building trusted clinical support content

How rigorous editorial processes help curate high-quality content for clinical decision support tools

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When it comes to clinical decision support (CDS), content is king. As a clinician, I believe healthcare provider confidence in CDS recommendations comes from knowing evidence-based methodologies helped build the content foundation. Researchers suggest that people are more likely to adopt CDS when they know how the content is derived.¹

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CDS content should be sourced from the latest, high-quality information. But with the staggering volume of input – from regulatory approvals and changes, to the thousands of articles published in medical literature each week – it can be a heavy lift for healthcare providers to evaluate it all.

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For example, just reading the abstract and conclusion of new research does not provide enough information about the quality of the study. To evaluate quality one must ask questions, such as: Did the methodology used match the intended purpose? Did researchers use an appropriate population? Were the results expected – why or why not? Have the authors considered other factors that might have influenced results?

Solid editorial principles and procedures help identify, prepare and validate the best clinical content to include in CDS tools. It's also important that the editorial team curating the CDS content consists of experienced clinicians who have practiced in the areas they are evaluating.

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4 questions healthcare providers should ask their CDS vendors

To help know they can trust clinical content in their CDS tools, clinicians should ask their vendors questions, including:

- **Where are you getting your evidence?** These resources should include the most current product labeling or primary literature. Some secondary sources may be appropriate, too.
- **How often do you add new content?** Medical discovery continues to move at a fast pace. New regulatory approvals and in-depth studies should be evaluated and added within a few business days. Even if medications are not available yet, it is valuable for clinicians to have access to the content.
- **What's your criteria for content review?** It is important to update the content when there is actionable, clinically relevant information, as well as review instances where the new information may replace older, outdated information. Periodically checking the most pertinent drugs for dosing and adverse event information helps improve accuracy.
- **How robust is your information?** Clinicians need more than just a list or basic information. They need true decision support, with content components such as study details, comparative efficacy, guideline recommendations, and detailed adverse effects and pharmacokinetics information just to name a few.

When clinicians are confident that their CDS is drawing recommendations from accurate, timely information, it helps build trust. They can deliver more informed care plans with trusted, evidence-based support.

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Editor's note: Dr. Baca is a member of the leadership team for IBM Micromedex, which provides evidence-based clinical decision support with content covering drug information, toxicology, diseases and conditions, and alternative medicine.

References:

1. CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/about/index.htm>
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