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Hania Szajewska Warsaw

Raanan Shamir Petach-Tikva

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Preface

'All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others'. This famous quote from George Orwell is relevant to medical research: all studies are equal but some studies are more equal than others. This reflects the hierarchy of evidence, one of the fundamental principles of evidence-based medicine (EBM), which is the topic of this book.

What exactly is EBM? The term 'EBM' first appeared in medical journals 21 years ago, i.e. in 1992. David Sackett, one of the pioneers in this field, defined EBM as *'the conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients'*.

Since the beginning, EBM has received criticism. Terms such as 'cookbook medicine', as well as accusations that EBM denigrates clinical expertise and ignores patient's views, were (and still are) commonly used and voiced by critics. Still, only 15 years after the term appeared, in 2007 the *British Medical Journal* considered EBM as one of the most important milestones of the last 160 years, along with such achievements as anesthesia, antibiotics, discovery of DNA structure, the pill, sanitation, or vaccines.

Thus, despite the skepticism, recognition of EBM is increasing rapidly, and it is unlikely to disappear. EBM has become essential to pediatric nutrition, hence the decision to dedicate this book to it.

The book starts with some methodological issues. It then summarizes, in a concise manner, current knowledge, but also ignorance and uncertainty, regarding some aspects of childhood nutrition. It does not intend to cover all topics, but it definitely covers the main items. It is based on evidence, summarizes current guidelines, but often, when there is no clear evidence, gives some food for thought.

Evidence, even if of the highest quality, is never enough, which is another fundamental principle of EBM. It will not apply to everyone. The evidence should not be applied blindly. Instead, the clinical decision should be an individual one and should take into account the patient context, including the patient's values regarding specific benefits and harms.

Being up to date with current medical research in order to deliver the best possible care to patients has never been easy, and it is not getting easier. We hope this book

will provide a framework from which decisions about pediatric nutrition can be made.

As editors, we would like to thank all contributing authors for their hard work. Without their commitment, this book would not have been possible.

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