

Part II

Case Examples of Evidence-Based Practice

1.1 Introduction

In the following section, eight case studies show how practitioners *do* the evidence-based practice (EBP) process and how it is integrated with clinical decision-making. The cases also demonstrate the complexities involved in the EBP process. They illustrate how the process is dependent on the four components of EBP: (1) the client's assessed clinical presentation, (2) the client's values and preferences, (3) the best available research evidence, and (4) the professional expertise and judgment of the clinical social worker. These constitute the four elements of the EBP practice decision-making process. The impact of agency mission and context, and how it shapes the social worker's role, is also examined.

The case materials are composites closely based on actual clients in order to protect privacy. The cases are both heavily disguised and include details from other, similar, cases. The cases are all reported in the same structured format. Each case opens with a summary of the client's presentation, concerns, and strengths. In addition, each of the six steps of the EBP practice decision-making process is described, leading the reader through them in detail. In some instances, several empirically supported treatment alternatives are identified; in others, the research offers less clear guidance. The relevance of the best available research to the specific client needs varies, as does the quality of the research located during the search process. Furthermore, in some instances, treatments with strong research support are easily accessed; in others, research supported options are not readily available to the client.

The EBP process says very little about the clinical assessment process and how the clinician determines the target problem on which the entire search process is based. It is assumed that professionals have the required "clinical expertise" to complete an appropriate and thorough assessment. In clinical social work practice, the types, severity, and number of challenges faced by clients can be daunting. Traditional mental health problems warranting DSM diagnoses as well as co-occurring social problems are common among the clients that clinical social workers

encounter. The cases illustrated in this text were chosen to reflect the diversity of clients that social workers see in a variety of real-world practice settings. How the social worker's role, in specific agency settings, also shapes the EBP process is illustrated. Below is a brief description of the cases and the clinical concerns raised within each case.

Chapter 11 – Sam: Sam is a 68-year-old white gay male who has suffered a series of losses in recent years and is reporting symptoms of grief and depression to an outpatient therapist.

Chapter 12 – Ray: Ray is a 27-year-old single white male who is suffering from panic attacks and is seeking agency-based outpatient services. He does not appear to have any other mental health issues, so these attacks are very distressing and confusing to him.

Chapter 13 – Sally: Sally is a 12-year-old biracial (African-American/white) girl who has been diagnosed with reactive attachment disorder. A biracial couple adopted Sally 2 years ago. Her parents are concerned about her lack of connection to them and her apparent willingness to turn to anyone for comfort and guidance.

Chapter 14 – Loretta and Newman: Loretta and Newman are the parents of Arthur, who is a 36-year-old African American male who has been diagnosed with schizophrenia and who has had a recent decline in functioning. The parents are seeking services through a hospital program for patients with schizophrenia and their caregivers and report increased feelings of stress about their own age-related health issues, the strain of caring for Arthur, and their fears of his future when they are not around to care for him.

Chapter 15 – Jin: Jin is a 16-year-old Korean-American male who was referred to an outpatient clinic after he was found, for the second time, passed out after drinking alcohol. His family is involved, and they are very concerned about his behavioral changes and his pulling away from his family and Korean community.

Chapter 16 – Jennifer: Jennifer is a 23-year-old white homeless female who has borderline personality disorder. Her immediate mental health and social service needs highlight the difficulties faced by persons with multiple challenges and few social supports.

Chapter 17 – Bethany: Bethany is a 32-year-old biracial women who has come to awareness of early trauma in the course of her work as an attorney. She seeks help from her employee assistance program since her work and home life are increasingly impacted.

Chapter 18 – Gabrielle: Gabrielle is a 24-year-old African-American female college student who has become dependent on opioids after a sports injury. She has many strengths and many social supports.