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What is evidence-based medicine?

- The **primary purpose of the NHS** is '*... to secure through the resources available the greatest possible improvement to the physical and mental health of the nation*'.¹ To achieve this, decisions about the delivery and provision of healthcare are increasingly being driven by evidence of clinical and cost-effectiveness as well as systematic assessment of actual health outcomes.
- **Evidence-based medicine (EBM)** is the process of systematically reviewing, appraising and using clinical research findings to aid the delivery of optimum clinical care to patients.²
- Increasingly, purchasers are looking to the **strength and weight of scientific evidence** on clinical practice and cost-effectiveness when allocating resources. They are using this information to encourage healthcare professionals and NHS trusts to use treatments that have been proven to be both clinically and cost-effective, while disinvesting from practice that does not meet these objectives.
- EBM forms part of the **multifaceted process** of assuring clinical effectiveness, the main elements of which are:
 - Production of evidence through research and scientific review
 - Production and dissemination of evidence-based clinical guidelines
 - Implementation of evidence-based, cost-effective practice through education and management of change
 - Evaluation of compliance with agreed practice guidance through clinical audit and outcomes-focused incentives.

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