Evidence-based health is a significant tool to manage information in occupational medicine. It empowers occupational physicians in several ways, as follows:

1. It enables epidemiological mappings of workers through more accurate methods. Therefore, it ensures scientific consistency to the analysis and reporting of the actual local conditions, determination of priority problems, and evaluation of solutions consistent with the local conditions. Occupational physicians might make profit of and adapt the cross-sectional design to local mappings.1

2. It provides occupational physicians a scientific comprehension of health risks in terms of magnitude, and of the level of scientific evidence supporting a causal relationship between exposure to hazards and disease. Establishing a causal link is a historical and scientific process which begins with case reports, develops through cohort studies, and concludes with benefit assessment in clinical trials of interventions for risk control.1,2

3. Occupational physicians are enabled to select, with scientific grounding, health technologies as a function of their efficacy (benefits measured in clinical trials), effectiveness (benefits measured in the real world) and efficiency or cost-effectiveness, through sufficient understanding of systematic reviews, meta-analyses and clinical trials. In regard to the evaluation of the effectiveness of implemented programs, scientific evidence might provide methods to measure outcomes of interest. An additional advantage is represented by the optimization of resources, and thus avoiding investing in health technologies without scientifically measured benefits.1,3

4. It helps occupational physicians keep themselves up-to-date, learn and contextualize, as well as select and classify information according to the quality of the scientific evidence. Occupational physicians are challenged everyday by issues related to management, toxicology, occupational hygiene, diseases corresponding to several specialties, and disability assessment, among others. Within this context, evidence-based health enables occupational physicians to manage information even on topics with which they are not thoroughly acquainted.3

5. It enables occupational medicine, as a technical and scientific specialty, to communicate with colleagues and society.4

Application of scientific evidence is relevant in all aspects of occupational medicine, from the design of health programs to management actions, follow-up and treatment of individual cases.

REFERENCES

2. Talmage JB, Melhorn JM, Hyman MH. AMA guides to the evaluation of work ability and return to work. Chicago: American Medical Association; 2011.