

How to Use an Article about Prognosis EBM Working Group

Relevance?

Were the study patients similar to my own?
Will the results lead directly to selecting therapy?
Are the results useful for reassuring patients?

Are the results valid?

Was there a representative and well-defined sample of patients at a similar point in the course of disease?
Was follow-up sufficiently long and complete?
Were objective and unbiased outcome criteria used?
Was there adjustment for important prognostic factors?
Was there validation in an independent group (test set) of patients?

What are the results?

How likely are the outcomes over time?
How precise are the estimates of likelihood?

References: JAMA 1994; 272: 234-237.

Understanding an article on prognosis.

The prognosis of a disease refers to its possible outcomes and the likelihood that each will occur.

A prognostic factor is a patient characteristic that can predict that patient's eventual outcome.

- a. demographic: e.g. age
- b. disease-specific: e.g. tumor stage
- c. comorbid: other conditions present

Prognostic results are the number of events that occur over time, expressed in:

1. absolute terms: e.g. 5 year survival rate
2. relative terms: e.g. risk from prognostic factor
3. survival curves: cumulative events over time

Finding an article on prognosis.

For 1991	For 1986
Incidence	Prognosis
Or exp mortality	Or exp cohort studies
Or follow-up studies	Or mortality (sh)
Or mortality (sh)	Or natural and history
Or prognosis (tw)	Or predict (tw)
Or predict (tw)	Or course (tw)
Or course (tw)	