Care of older people continues to suffer low status within the health care system. Accreditation has resulted in a greater acceptance of, and commitment to, continuous quality improvement in the aged care sector, however practice in all health settings requires a stronger evidence base. The Australian Centre for Evidence Based Aged Care (ACEBAC), a collaborating Centre of JBI, has as its focus, the development and provision of the best available evidence related to care of older people. ACEBAC is guided by a multi disciplinary advisory board, and feedback from its members. Currently systematic reviews are being conducted on the following topics:

- Wandering
- Sleep
- Skin care, and
- Pain in people with dementia.

Soon to be published is a review on ‘Responding to Behaviours of Concern in Acute and Subacute Settings’. Protocols are being developed for 2004 related to medication management and aggression. In addition to the reviews requested by members, ACEBAC is also undertaking research funded by university, government and industry partners. Each review is supported by a panel of experts.

Having the evidence available is only one step in the process of improving care. Getting the evidence into practice is a challenge for all nurses. Numerous papers have been written on the barriers to utilisation of research and strategies for overcoming these barriers. ACEBAC can assist members with implementation and is involved in a major three year clinical practice improvement project. This project involves systematically reviewing the literature on topics suggested as priorities by our industry partners, evaluating practices to determine which are associated with the best outcomes, developing guidelines and then using action research to implement and evaluate the guidelines.

A major issue for nurses working with older people is the increasing expectation that they will base their practice on evidence when, too often, there is no rigorous evidence to support this. Undertaking research, of course, requires funding and caring for older people has not been seen by funding bodies as an area of high priority. The Commonwealth Government now has established ageing as a priority area and a recent initiative to highlight and develop some strategic direction for ageing research, Building Ageing Research Capacity (BARC), is cause for some optimism. However, if the nursing care of older people is to benefit it will be important to see funds directed not only to biomedical and social science research. ACEBAC will continue to argue for the importance of evidence to underpin care and the consequent need for associated research funding. In the meantime, ACEBAC can assist with locating what evidence there is and will continue to build an evidence base for aged care practice.