Dermatitis is a distressing symptom of radiation therapy, and current care guidelines often lack evidence. Using an evidence-based practice (EBP) model, a multidisciplinary group in an academic medical center reviewed the literature to create departmental patient education materials related to skin care that were grounded in evidence. Recommendations not supported by evidence from randomized, controlled trials were viewed within a stress-reduction framework. Until evidence related to the prevention and treatment of radiation dermatitis is more fully developed, skin care recommendations for patients with cancer who receive radiation may need to be based on evidence and theory. In addition, care for patients with radiation dermatitis should encompass strategies aimed at physical and psychosocial stressors.

The purpose of this article is to describe how a preexisting but unarticulated conceptual framework for skin care recommendations emerged from a multidisciplinary effort to make existing patient education materials in a hospital-based outpatient setting more evidence based. The article also will show how the use of an evidence-based practice (EBP) model helped to articulate a framework for traditional, department-level skin care recommendations not supported by high levels of evidence from randomized, controlled trials (RCTs). Using evidence from randomized, controlled trials were viewed within a stress-reduction framework. Until evidence related to the prevention and treatment of radiation dermatitis is more fully developed, skin care recommendations for patients with cancer who receive radiation may need to be based on evidence and theory. In addition, care for patients with radiation dermatitis should encompass strategies aimed at physical and psychosocial stressors.