Absence of evidence does not mean evidence of absence

Because...

• There are few studies and limited information prevents us from knowing whether a treatment works
• Some treatments are difficult to study and there is a lot of uncertainty about study results
• The evidence from studies is contradictory and it is difficult to draw a conclusion

Warning signs

“There is no evidence to support the treatment”
“It has no effect…”

Beware of ambiguous expressions that do not make it clear whether we know a treatment does not work or we do not know whether it works

• Look out for when “no evidence” is described as “no effect”
• Don’t confuse “there is no evidence” with “there is no difference” between treatments
• Remember that lack of evidence is not conclusive proof that a treatment has no effect, but an indicator that more studies are needed to find out about any effects

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