

## How to Stratify Scientific Evidence: Accessing the Hierarchy of Evidence in Evidence-Based Medicine

*Hsiang-Ke Chao*

Department of Economics, National Tsing Hua University  
E-mail: hkchao@mx.nthu.edu.tw

*Yi-Hsuan Kao*

Department of Philosophy, University of Western Ontario  
E-mail: ykao23@uwo.ca

### Abstract

This paper examines the hierarchy of evidence originating from evidence-based medicine and the dominant view among evidence-based practices across disciplines. Philosophers and practitioners have proposed several accounts to modify the hierarchy and challenge the criteria for stratifying evidence according to the methods by which they are derived. By way of reviewing and commenting on the existing accounts of evidence, we suggest a classification of evidence by distinguishing between the relevant actors as evidence users and producers, and their purposes as decision- or conclusion-oriented. While the traditional hierarchy of evidence is characterized by an evidence producer-decision-oriented approach, evidential pragmatism in the philosophy of science takes an evidence user-conclusion-oriented approach, and evidence-based medicine an evidence user-decision-oriented approach.

**Key Words:** scientific evidence, evidence-based medicine, hierarchy of evidence, evidential pragmatism