

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



Private Practitioner Driven Research: ENGINE OF THE FUTURE?

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Associate Editor

Yes, we are at an exciting time where the facet of research has added a whole new dimension: Practice Based Research. This term, although it might be new for most of us, has been an established one in the field of dentistry at least in some parts of the country and even the world.

It was during the completion of my residency at the University of Alabama School of Dentistry that the first dental practice based research network (DPBRN) was created. This was around 2005, where it was big news that our dental school research team had landed the biggest National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR — the dental division of NIH) grant in the history of the dental school. I believe it was around 25 million dollars and this obviously was huge.

Those who have been in academics, especially on the research side, may know what a prestigious award the NIDCR grant is and,

more importantly, how difficult it is to get one, given the rigorous process entailed in obtaining it.

DPBRN was something that the people at the NIDCR saw as a whole new direction for research, a practice based approach which had never been done before, at least not to the extent or magnitude this grant promised. This stemmed from the research team's initial effort of trying to tie practices to the University as early as 2002, to gather clinical data.

Based on its success with the pilot part of the study, the team was able to present it to NIDCR and obtain the huge grant. I believe NIDCR saw this as a new direction: one which was going to lead a whole group of clinicians into academics. They can be in their offices practicing everyday dentistry, and at the same time generate data for clinical analysis which will provide answers

for numerous unanswered questions. Imagine if you were practicing your everyday dentistry and someone was able to gather the data, tie it up with other practitioners in the Sacramento area, run the statistics and get some answers. That would be the most meaningful study for our Sacramento community. Most of the time we practice what was the conclusion of a study done in a far off country or state, but rarely are we able to customize it to our community.

I believe the time is not far off when our Sacramento area dentists will be part of a research network tied to a dental school in San Francisco or even to UC Davis. I hope that these PBRN's will soon become accessible to our local communities with the involvement of more dentists, thereby advancing the profession by applying scientific guidelines to generate robust clinical data which will drive the way we will practice dentistry in future. ■

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