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# Practice Based Dental Research - Advancing and Improving Dental Practice

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# Practice-based dental research – advancing and improving dentistry

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Published in 1919, an article by Dr. William J. Gies in the first issue of the *Journal of Dental Research* eloquently states the importance of research to the profession of dentistry.<sup>1</sup>

“Research is the mainspring in the chronometer of science. It is the register of a profession’s achievement and standing. With it there is life, growth and effectiveness, and enthusiasm in those who devote themselves to the high calling of a profession. Without research, however, empiricism, stagnation, inefficiency, and discouragement impair the usefulness of those who earnestly seek to render their best professional service.”

Sadly, research has not always been an undertaking that dental practitioners value and many view it as purely an academic activity conducted by others for the benefit of those who aren’t obligated to participate in the process.

This scenario, where the practitioner is disengaged from any sort of scholarly activity, leads us one step closer to becoming a vocation rather than a profession.

Historically, there has been a gap between those that perform research and those that practice clinical dentistry, with most of these individuals firmly entrenched in one camp or the other.

The objective of contemporary dental edu-

cation is not to make every dentist a scientist, but rather to make every dentist a man or woman of science.

Only by becoming a person of science is there any hope that the practitioner will be able to acquire and assimilate new knowledge and adapt to the changes in practice and in the profession that the future always requires.<sup>2</sup>

The general trend in dental education has been to become more evidence-based and the Marquette University School of Dentistry has been at the forefront in this curricular evolution.

Our graduates are well-versed in not only the methodology of evidence-based practice, but more importantly, they recognize its value in practical clinical application.

Now is the time for our more experienced practitioners to join our new colleagues, dispel old beliefs and open themselves to an exciting way of helping advance the science of dentistry by challenging the notion that only “researchers” can and should do research.

Funded by the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, the National Dental Practice-Based Research Network or PBRN was implemented to bridge the gap between research and dental practice thereby helping dental professionals directly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of dental care.

Enrolling a large number of practicing dentists in a variety of practice types and locations will result in more reliable outcome measures, while contributing to the development of knowledge that can improve oral health on a national scale.

There is no cost to join and enrolling in the network is as simple as completing the enrollment questionnaire at [www.nationaldentalpbrn.org](http://www.nationaldentalpbrn.org) where you are allowed to choose one of three levels of participation:

- Informational – receive newsletters and correspondence
- Limited – receive newsletters, correspondence and participate in surveys
- Full – receive newsletters and correspondence, participate in surveys and engage in research

Thanks to the strength of Wisconsin Dental Association membership, we have the potential to significantly influence the success of this important program.

Your enrollment, even at the informational level, will help us toward achieving this goal.

In the coming months, I hope to provide more insight into evidence-based practice and the National Dental PBRN at WDA component dental society meetings.

Until then, I would be happy to answer any questions you might have at [gary.stafford@mu.edu](mailto:gary.stafford@mu.edu).

1- Bertolami, C. N. (2002). The role and importance of research and scholarship in dental education and practice. *Journal of dental education*, 66(8), 918-926.

2- Smith, A. J. (2005). Research Through the Years-the Foundation for Dentistry Today. *Journal of dental research*, 84(10), 870-870.



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