

Evidence-Based Dentistry—Where Are We?

Several months ago, I received a weekly e-gram update from the American Dental Association (ADA). I noticed that the ADA was requesting volunteers to attend their third Evidence-Based Dentistry (EBD) Champion Conference. The program was limited to 100 applicants, and the ADA was screening and selecting the attendees. I decided to apply, having received previous training in EBD on multiple occasions. For background information, I was one of 10 individuals selected to attend two 1-week intensive training sessions on EBD at McMaster's University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada nearly 20 years ago. Along with Drs. Jack Preston, George Zarb, Jim Anderson, Brien Lang, Rhonda Jacob, Alan Carr, Patrick Lloyd, Gary Goldstein, and Glenn McGivney, the two sessions at McMaster's proved to be what was perhaps one of the pivotal experiences of my young (at that time) academic career. We published guidelines on EBD, and the ACP actually held two conferences on EBD targeted initially at training our Graduate Program Directors and subsequently other prosthodontists and interested individuals in private practice and academics. Unfortunately for the ACP, funding sources disappeared, but the Academy of Prosthodontics (AP) took up the mantle and continued teaching the precepts of EBD to its members and guests during many of its annual sessions since that time, the most recent being a joint session with the ACP during its April Pre-doctoral and Post-graduate Educators Meeting in Chicago. Granted, we have our own EBD "Champions" in both the AP and ACP, and we should pride ourselves on leading the charge of EBD into dentistry.

So, seeing the ADA's program advertised, my curiosity was piqued; I applied and was accepted as an attendee. I was most curious to see what the ADA had to offer, and whether their training in EBD was at the same level of that of the AP and ACP. Here is what I learned at the conference:

- (1) This was the third (and perhaps last) EBD Champion Conference the ADA has hosted, supported by an educational grant from Procter & Gamble. Whether the funding continues for subsequent conferences has not been determined. In addition, the ADA has partnered with Forsyth Institute in Boston for a 5-day intensive EBD course. The next course will be held from September 27 to October 1, 2010. For additional information, you can contact Julie Frantsve-Hawley at frantsvej@ada.org.
- (2) The ADA has a very active EBD program, and has a Research Institute and Center for EBD. Julie Frantsve-Hawley is the Director, and Krishna Aravamudhan is the Assistant Director. Both are highly knowledgeable and dynamic individuals who enthusiastically champion the cause of EBD.
- (3) The ADA's recently revamped web page (www.ada.org) has an EBD page (www.ada.org/prof/resources/ebd/index.asp) that is easy to navigate and that provides excellent information for the practicing dentist and dental specialist. The web site has multiple links to pertinent systematic reviews on a multitude of dental (and yes, Prosthodontic) topics. These reviews have been compiled by former EBD Champions who have attended the previous conferences, learned the basic precepts of EBD, and volunteered their time to evaluate review manuscripts for inclusion on the ADA's site. Whether you are an ADA member or not, you have access to this information free of charge.
- (4) The ADA's EBD webpage also has a direct link to the Cochrane Collaboration's listing of systematic reviews in all categories (medicine, dentistry, etc). The Cochrane Collaboration Reviews are considered the highest levels of evidence, given the stringent criteria used during the review process. The ADA has negotiated a free link to the Cochrane Collaboration's site *provided* you are an ADA member for the 2010 year. This link is on the EBD web page of the ADA. Hopefully, this collaborative free access to the Cochrane reviews will be continued into the future.
- (5) Using the information from the EBD website, the ADA is putting together a series of evidence-based clinical recommendations for use by practitioners. Two were provided to the attendees at the Champions Conference (pit and fissure sealants, and professionally applied topical fluorides). More are in development. These are 6.5" × 9" double sided, laminated cards suitable for use in the operatory. They are color coded, and make clinical recommendations based on the strength of the available evidence. These were the most frequently cited "pearls" from the attendees at the Conference.

As for the Champions Conference itself, most attendees were private practicing general dentists, with reasonable representation by those in all areas of dental education; prior experience in EBD ranged from those with my background to those who did not know what EBD stood for prior to attending. The Conference speakers were outstanding, with Janet Clarkson (from the Cochrane Oral Health Group) and our very own Steve Campbell providing truly inspiring presentations. Everyone attending the Conference, in my opinion, benefited greatly from the two days of intensive seminars. The ADA should be complimented on its current efforts, particularly in regards to its hosting of these meetings, and to its development of the Center for Evidence-Based Dentistry and EBD website. And, while the ADA's EBD training program may not be quite to the level of what the AP and ACP have done thus far, it is closing the gap, and filling in the areas where we lacked the vision to do so. The ADA is spreading the precepts of EBD to "the masses." At this point, I can only say "BRAVO"!

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