



Board Certification Status and Practice Characteristics

The American Board of Pediatric Dentistry (ABPD) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the recent article *Board Certification Status and Pediatric Dentists Practice Characteristics* (Pediatr Dent 2005;27:12-18).

It is not surprising that responses to the authors' questionnaire regarding adherence to guidelines were overwhelmingly positive regardless of certification status. This study did not assess the actual practice of the respondents; rather it looked at their responses regarding some aspects of their practices. A much more accurate assessment would be based not on the individual's opinion of whether they are compliant regarding quality measures and performance standards, but rather on an actual evaluation of this compliance.

Professional certification has a long and well-established external validity and is increasingly valuable to medical and dental professionals for employment, promotions, reimbursements, and participation in health plans. In other words, independent rational decision-makers have evaluated their experiences with health care specialists certified

in a variety of disciplines and decided on the value of certification. Thus, it is fair to assume that the health care industry, academia, and the market place have judged and given preference to those providers who have acquired professional certification.

We understand that the certification process is not perfect, and ABPD is continuously evaluating its examinations and modifying them as needed to assure the best assessment of the candidates who seek certification and maintenance of certification. We look forward to the time when all pediatric dentists are certified, and we will work toward that end.

Constance M. Killian, DMD

President

American Board of Pediatric Dentistry

Iowa City, Iowa

Correspond with Dr. Killian at cmkillian@aol.com

As a member of the College of Diplomates of the American Board of Pediatric Dentistry (ABPD), the article, *Board Certification and Pediatric Dentists' Practice Characteristics* by (Pediatr Dent 2005;27:12-18) caught my attention.

Indeed, a professional always needs to separate "valid data" from "questionable data" and in my opinion, the purpose and methods of this survey are flawed and render the conclusions questionable. For example, although I was not included in the sample surveyed, a colleague was, and we both noted that the espoused purpose was a practice management survey and not intended to compare specific groups of individuals. Is it not a requirement of an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application that subjects be informed of the *true* purpose of the study? Did the author(s) receive an IRB approval? In addition, there was no breakdown as to whether any of the "nondiplomates" surveyed were in the process of becoming board certified and had, in fact, taken the ABPD Written Examination,

and thus, were knowledgeable about American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) treatment guidelines. The authors' explanation that "it was too difficult to quantify" seems a bit weak. The sample who returned the survey was predominantly female, 73% diplomate and 69% nondiplomate. Does this accurately reflect the gender distribution of the AAPD membership during the years surveyed, 1980-1999? Regarding the selection of samples, I was not able to find an explanation of how the sample pairs were created. Were they randomly assigned by an unbiased computer program? Or were they handpicked to maximize the results desired? And lastly, the methods describe a 30-item survey, but the article only reports on 29 items. Why? Based on the above factors, I have considerable concerns about the lack of bias in the conclusions presented by the authors.

In truth, the ABPD through its assessment/evaluation of the AAPD Oral Health Policies and Clinical Guidelines in their examination processes has greatly contributed to

Copyright of Pediatric Dentistry is the property of American Society of Dentistry for Children. The copyright in an individual article may be maintained by the author in certain cases. Content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.