



CASE

SCHOOL OF DENTAL MEDICINE

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Ohio Dental Practice Based Research Network

The Direct Observation Study Your Part in Evidence Based Dentistry

Practice visits for the Direct Observation Study began June 1, 2004. These visits will continue through August of 2005 at which time we will have visited 120 practices in northern Ohio. The study's purpose is to directly observe what dentists actually do in the real world of dental practice and from this evidence provide analysis of how "best practices" operate. This information should be useful to all practitioners. The visits are carried out by two observation teams,

each consisting of two dental hygienists and one patient coordinator. During the 3 day visit, one hygienist follows a dentist and the other a hygienist (if present) recording specific behaviors that are part of patient interactions. On a fourth day the team audits charts and collects billing data for those patients seen during the days of observation. The patient coordinator is responsible for explaining the project to patients, obtaining informed consent, and recording ob-

servations concerning the practice environment. The teams include Marianne Scherry, RDH, Marlene Rodriguez, RDH, Gail Perry, RDH and Kate Mingus, RDH. Each hygienist has 10 years of experience in dental offices. The patient coordinators are Marian Kofford (the wife of a first year dental student) and Joy Wiedemann (a former teacher). As of October 1 we have visited 30 practices, 1/4 of the total.

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Direct Observation Research Team

Kate Mingus, Marian Kofford, Marlene Rodriguez, Joy Wiedemann, Marianne Scherry, Gail Perry (L to R)



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Network Organization—Steering Committee

The Ohio Dental Practice Based Research Network was formed in 1998 based at Case Western Reserve University. The purpose was to provide a laboratory to collect evidence about the practice of dentistry in real world settings. Practice Based Research Networks had been active in Family Medicine and Pediatrics, but this is the first dental practice based network. Over the past 6 years the network has engaged in several small studies (mostly concerning oral cancer) carried out by dental students. Its main effort has been to secure funding for a major study of dental practice, the direct observation study,

which was funded by the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research for 4 years starting December 1, 2003. This 2.5 million dollar study will enable the creation of a comprehensive database concerning dental practice and depends on the continued collaboration with and development of the Network. The Network formed a steering committee which encouraged the continuing efforts to fund the direct observation study. Now that the network has been fully activated it is time for the steering committee to come together again and help interpret the data and come up with

new questions concerning dental practice that can be explored utilizing our staff as a resource. Notices are being sent to Steering Committee members for a meeting in early December or January. At this meeting there will be an update of progress and discussion of possible new questions for future funding or student research. After data collection is complete (Fall 2005) a meeting of the entire network will be held at Case and a preliminary report of findings will be presented. If you wish to be part of the Steering Committee please email vah4@case.edu.

Feedback for Participants: What do you want to know?

Although the Direct Observation Study will provide unique information important to all dentists, the detailed information gathered in each individual office provides the opportunity for each practitioner to have data concerning his or her practice that can be compared to all of the other practices in the study. Because the data we are collecting is so comprehensive

we have many options concerning what information would be most useful to report back to individual offices. These reports will start when we have visited sufficient offices for comparison (next spring or summer). Our early ideas include, the geographic distribution of patients (mapped), most common and least common procedures pro-

vided, information concerning satisfaction of patients, dentists and hygienists, per cent of emergency, primary and rehabilitative care provided by the office, billing per unit time. Are there other specific data that you would like to see for your practice?

If so, email your ideas to swx2@case.edu.