

NEWS

Swedish participation in practice-based research

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Swedish dentists participate in a comprehensive American practice-based research network. The aim is to develop practice based evidence in order to prevent and treat oral diseases.

Many research findings within odontology are scientifically well-founded and statistically significant – but nevertheless clinically useless. Besides, a great deal of what a dentist does every day is based on experience alone.

– In our clinic, we follow the results and stop using a certain material or treatment method, if we see that it doesn't work optimally, but it takes time, says Per Pålsson, private dentist in Malmö and one of the twelve dentists in Sweden who participate in a practice based research network, financed by "National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research" (NIDCR) in the US. The network includes clinics in different states in the US as well as in Scandinavia. Altogether, around 500 dentists participate in the network, of which about 50 are Scandinavian.

NIDCR supports the build-up of three "Dental Practice-Based Research Networks". Each network includes hundreds of clinics.

The aim is to carry out more than twenty clinical studies during a seven-year period which expires three and a half year from now. Among other things, these studies concern:

- * diagnosis and treatment of caries
- * cracked teeth
- * survival of implants
- * pros and cons, regarding preventive removal of third molars

It is expected that practice based research will give better answers to the question: Which solutions are the best for general practitioners in public and private practice?

Hesitates with restoring

So far, Per Pålsson has participated in two studies. The first study was about assessment of caries diagnostics and treatment. After having joined this study, he now waits a little longer before taking action when he finds initial caries.

The second study was about reasons for the first restoration in permanent teeth. In Scandinavia twenty-five patients per dentist participated in the study, which is soon finished. As there are not so many of this type of treatment on adults in Sweden, it took some time to find a sufficient number of patients. After the second study, he is even more convinced that it is better to wait a little before restoring.

Per Pålsson is also going to participate in a long-term study concerning restorations in surfaces that haven't been restored earlier, i.e. a follow-up of the restorations made in the second study.

"Epoch-making"

Per Pålsson regards NIDCR's great staking on practice based research as epoch making. The network is a strong basis for change and development. And it is positive that dentists with different experiences take part, he thinks. It gives new ideas, and contributes to improvement of the quality of

care in each clinic.

– I have learned to look more systematically at my own treatments in general, and not only when they are part of a study, he says.

That Scandinavia forms a corner in one of the networks makes it even more interesting, he thinks. So far, the studies have shown that there are major differences between the ways dentists treat their patients in the US, compared to Scandinavia, he says.

Room for more participants

Dentists who are interested in quality control of their own work, and would like to participate in a research project, may announce their interest to participate in the practice based network to Dr. Odont. Vibeke Qvist, associate professor at the Dental School at University of Copenhagen. She is the project leader for the Scandinavian part of the network.

There are certain formal requirements to participate. Participators must be working in a clinic at least one day in the week, answer some questions concerning his/her work and ethical matters, and go through some education.

Then the participator decides which studies he/she wishes to join. Within each study, training, when necessary, will be arranged in the participators own clinic. Participators will receive compensation for the time spent on recording and paper work.

However, one obstacle is that Swedish and American authorities have different ethical claims for approval of projects. Vibeke Qvist is not sure that this problem can be solved. For further information, see: www.dentalPBRN.org.

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