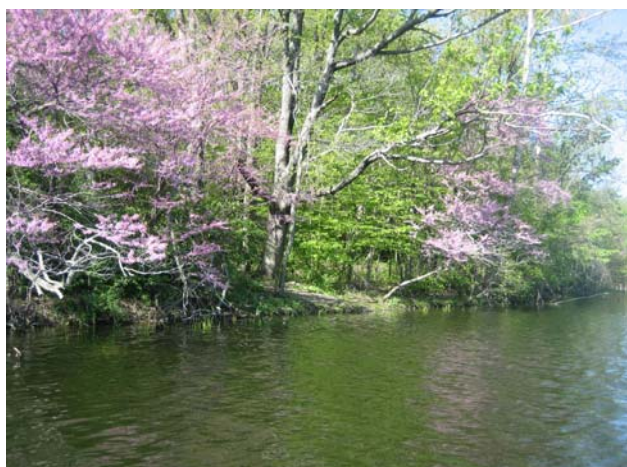




## Spring Greetings from Indiana

Hello again – I just can't believe how quickly this year is flying by. The spring weather has a real hold now in the mid-west and it is very pleasant place to be! The picture below is taken from our visit to Chain O Lakes State Park which is situated in the north-east of Indiana near the border with Michigan.



Alexandra will be contributing most of the information contained within this newsletter but I just wanted to keep in touch and mention how much I'm looking forward to catching up with you all later this year.

While we're on the subject of Alexandra, she has been like a breath of fresh air I must say. I'm hoping that all of you have had the chance to meet or speak with her and I know she has helped several of you who were having a few problems getting those recruitment numbers to an acceptable level. She has also been assisting with the literature review and her "pet project", the Monitor Dental Practice website which will be up and running soon. Alex has more information on this later in this issue.

## Recruitment

The mailing system is working well and I have successfully received over 350 recruitment

forms since my arrival in Indiana. We have now passed the "magical" 800 figure and I would just continue to encourage those of you who are still a little short to hang in there. Please contact myself or Alex if you would like any assistance.

We're currently putting the finishing touches to the first paper that we hope to have published related to this research; the paper will detail the recruitment process, display the results of the time-in-motion study (yes, the me sitting in the corner of your surgery study!!), and the radiographic kappa analysis.

It was great to catch up with Eli Schwarz last week by phone – he was in Arkansas, and we'll both be attending the Biostatistics conference in Montreal in July. Well, that's about it for the moment from me – best wishes to all of you  
Brad Curtis

## A message from Alexandra Sbaraini

Firstly, I would like to thank you all for the warm welcome to the project and to say that I am delighted in being part of such a great team. In this edition I will refer to the need of getting research into dental private practice and to the creation of our website.

## The need to get research into private dental practice

As we all know, private dental practice is where the majority of dental treatment is carried out. As a consequence, practice-based data from general dental practices is required to enhance the findings of experimental setting investigations. Clinical experience should be considered as a resource for dental research and to help develop alternative directions to dental research.

I strongly agree with the statement by Mjor (2005): "Practice based research networks are research laboratories as essential to advancing the scientific understanding of dental care as





bench laboratories are to advancing knowledge in the basic sciences"<sup>1</sup>. As mentioned by Burke and McCord<sup>2</sup>, the pool of results from involved practices may provide regional and national values of disease incidence (caries incidence) among particular social and age groups, as well as in particular sites. Research carried out in a real-life situation is also likely to indicate true performance of materials and true incidence of disease.

A challenge in practice-based research is to develop a study that not only has a strong scientific basis but also employs simple indices, a comprehensive protocol, and steadiness in the use of forms and procedures, and (most importantly) well-motivated dental practitioners. Lack of calibration is often reported as a weakness in practice-based research. Attempts have been made to maintain inter-examiner and intra-examiner consistency by means of intensive training. It has previously been concluded that it is possible to train dentists in order to achieve high levels of inter-examiner consistency and to maintain these levels after 12 months<sup>2</sup>.

This study has confirmed that dentists are able to achieve consistent and reproducible diagnostic results in the short term if clear criteria such as lesion grading are used. Other authors report that incorporation of a randomization system in the study design will reduce any bias due to unequal distribution of possible confounders<sup>3</sup>.

However, it could reasonably be argued that once all variables are controlled, the research is not really practice-based any longer. Once all variables are controlled, the research would become a well-controlled trial, which may fail to consider the extent to which the obtained results will be important and applicable in the treatment of dental practice patients.

#### References:

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2. Burke FTJ, McCord JF (1993). Research in General Dental Practice – problems and solutions. *British Dental Journal* 175:396-398.
3. Eaton KA, Rimini FM, Zak E, Brookman DJ, Newman HN (1997). The achievement and maintenance of inter-examiner consistency in the assessment of plaque and gingivitis during a multicentre study based in general dental practices. *Journal of Clinical Periodontology*; 24: 183-188.
4. Wilson MA, Cowan AJ, Randall RC, Crisp RJ, Wilson NH (2002). A practice-based, randomised, controlled clinical trial of a new resin composite restorative: one-year results. *Operative Dentistry*; 27: 423-42.

#### The MPP website

The creation of a website for our project was a challenge at the beginning for someone having a dental background. At the same time, I must say that this was what made it so interesting.

The main goals of this idea are the enhancement of our communication and performance to better respond to your needs as a participant in the research, and to be a source of information for patients and the community.

The whole creation process could be compared to a patient treatment plan, like those that we had to do at Uni, when we had to use all knowledge gathered throughout the years, ask for a colleague/teacher opinion, use of common sense, and really believe in what we were doing as being the best for that patient. Once you get the right result, you and the patient are delighted, and you feel good for being able to do it.

I truly wish that you enjoy browsing our website. Warm regards to all, Alex.

