Bridging Community Dental Practitioners to Research: The South Texas Oral Health Network (STOHN)

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Abstract

Dental practice-based research networks (PBRNs) are consortia of practices committed to supporting research projects aimed at improving clinical care. Participation in a PBRN provides investigative experience for dental practitioners as they contribute to the evidence base for dental practice, and it returns the information gained from the network back to the practices with the goal of improving the quality of care. The South Texas Oral Health Network (STOHN) affiliated with the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio, was established through the Clinical Translational Science Award funded by the National Institutes of Health in May 2008. STOHN provides a centralized university-based infrastructure, a link to research resources, and an engine to move projects forward. This infrastructure allows practitioners and faculty to easily participate actively in research leading to collaborative community partnerships. STOHN’s 60 members are very committed to participating in research activities and have contributed to research at each stage of its development. The article outlines an approach to building a research network, and it provides examples of clinical achievements from the dental practice-based research.

Key Words: Practice-based research network; dentistry; community practitioners; clinical practice; clinical research