

## Testimonial from Dr. Wendy Holder



The organizers of the National Dental Practice-Based Research Network 2021 Annual Meeting managed to transform “just another zoom conference” into an amazing interactive event which transcended the virtual platform and created opportunities for interaction while captivating the audience. We are all more than a little burnt out on zoom events. To be honest, when I first heard that our National Dental PBRN 2021 Annual Meeting was virtual, I was disappointed and expected the same old technical glitches and lackluster speakers trying hard to connect with a virtual audience. But, to my surprise and delight, that was not the case!

Ryan was a great host and managed to keep the flow of the meeting moving, engage the participants and provide thoughtful and funny transitions. The speakers were prepared and presented with clarity, results from past and ongoing studies while pointing out future studies that we would need to actively pursue to continue our progress. There were no awkward pauses to deal with glitchy technology and the speakers were rehearsed and able to establish connection with the audience as if we were present. The speaker sessions flew by as the audience drank in the data until time for breakout sessions.

My experiences with breakout sessions over the last 18 months have been mixed at best, but the PBRN nailed them. The breakout participants include a diverse group of experienced and inexperienced dentists representing a variety of geographic regions. We began with a discussion about selective caries removal. The ensuing discussion allowed the participants to explore both conservative and more radical treatment plans and discuss the pros and cons of both. It was interesting to hear the perspectives from so many of the participants who weren't shy about respectfully challenging the positions of others. Again, the organizers overcame the traditional challenges of the virtual zoom platform.

When the discussion moved to the feasibility of teledentistry, it became obvious that the circumstances of the COVID shutdown forced all dentists to delve into previously uncharted waters. Many shared their success and frustrations of trying to diagnose and treat using selfies of broken teeth taken by less than proficient “photographers.” I think every participant had at least one story of receiving the photo of a roof of the mouth rather than the tooth in question! There was more acceptance among newer and more tech savvy dentists than the more experienced cadre about the future of teledentistry. One interesting consideration that was raised was the application of teledentistry in more remote and rural areas as a stopgap measure. It was universally agreed, however, that in person consultations were preferred.

After the breakouts, the wrap up kicked off smoothly and flowed beautifully. The timing was perfect. Ryan, our host, encouraged some regional competition which quickly filled up the chat boxes. He was able to create high energy and keep the process interactive. I even learned about the “Gator Chomp” but am still convinced the “Big Dawg’s Bite” is much more effective.

Kudos again to the organizers of a great event. You managed to create a genuinely interactive experience for an eclectic and diverse group despite the virtual platform.