



toolbox

'First Byte' – a review of the Centre for Evidence-based Dentistry web site

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The Centre for Evidence-based Dentistry (CEBD) web site contains evidence based reviews, articles and links to sites of further interest. The authors assessed it taking into account such factors as design, content and effectiveness.

The authors felt that this was a valuable site for dental practitioners, centralising a wealth of high quality information. Some suggestions are offered to improve further an excellent web site.

Author's note

This site was reviewed over the period 15th to 20th October 1999. Since the review period, content has been updated.

Introduction

The Centre for Evidence-based Dentistry web site (which can be viewed at <http://www.ihs.ox.ac.uk/cebd/index.htm>) is hosted at the Institute of Health Sciences, Oxford and exists to promote the adoption of evidence-based practice by dental practitioners.

Many web sites providing high-quality information are ignored by users because of their unattractive layout. As such the authors examined the layout and design, relevance and quality of content and the effectiveness of the site using a long standing, highly effective advertising tool, the AIDA model¹. This examines the Attention a communication attracts, the Interest it creates, the Desire of the user to pursue something and whether the user is moved into Action.

Attention

The predominant colour scheme, yellow text on teal background, achieved a balance between simplicity and visual impact, avoiding the common errors of overly plain or disorientating design (see Figure 1). The site was conventionally laid out, employing hypertext links and screen buttons to navigate to clearly defined topic areas.

The clear identification of the site's source, full contact details and a date of last revision were all present. These are important indicators when assessing the validity of any site, essential because of the large quantity of questionable health information on the net. (See Kiley²).

Successive visits over a 2-month period confirmed that the site is updated on a regular basis. This contrasts well with many other web sites and ensures that the links to other sites remain current.

Interest

The hypertext links were clear and of interest to most users. In tests, the majority of links worked and the two that didn't appeared to be temporary faults on the target site; they worked the

following day. This is crucial if users are to persist in visiting the site and maintains confidence in both the site and, by association, the quality of material presented.

Desire

There were reservations about the quality of one or two links. For example, amongst many Royal Colleges, Universities and NGOs was an unexpected link showcasing an American dentist's CV.

The link to the Evidence-Based Dentistry supplement of the BDJ at present offers only the contents page rather than full text articles. Improvements are, however, planned for this facility.

Navigation using the buttons and links was straightforward, though inexperienced users or those needing answers quickly would benefit from a keyword search facility.

Action

There is the prospect of increased communication between the users and hosts. Users could be encouraged to email responses, comments or questions relating to information on the site, to facilitate adoption of information. Additionally, guidelines could be published for how to submit research to the site or how to link to tools enabling the dentist to implement any findings into their daily practice.

It is not possible to assess the site for success in promoting evidence-based practice. Future development could focus on determining the intended audience, whether they are being

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reached, their use of the site and whether it has resulted in their adopting evidence-based practices.

Conclusion

Although some minor improvements could be made, this is an easy criticism to make. The key area for future development of this site is in evaluating

the impact on users in encouraging evidence-based practices.

However, these observations should not detract from a site that is already of great value to dentists and has the potential to be a powerful agent for positive change.

The authors would urge practitioners to visit this site. Those who do so will

not only find it rewarding, but will probably add the site address to their personal list of 'favourites'!

1. Strong KK. The Psychology of Selling. New York, McGraw Hill 1925.
2. Kiley R. Easy as falling off a log-on. The Guardian, Section 2, January 12th 1999. p15

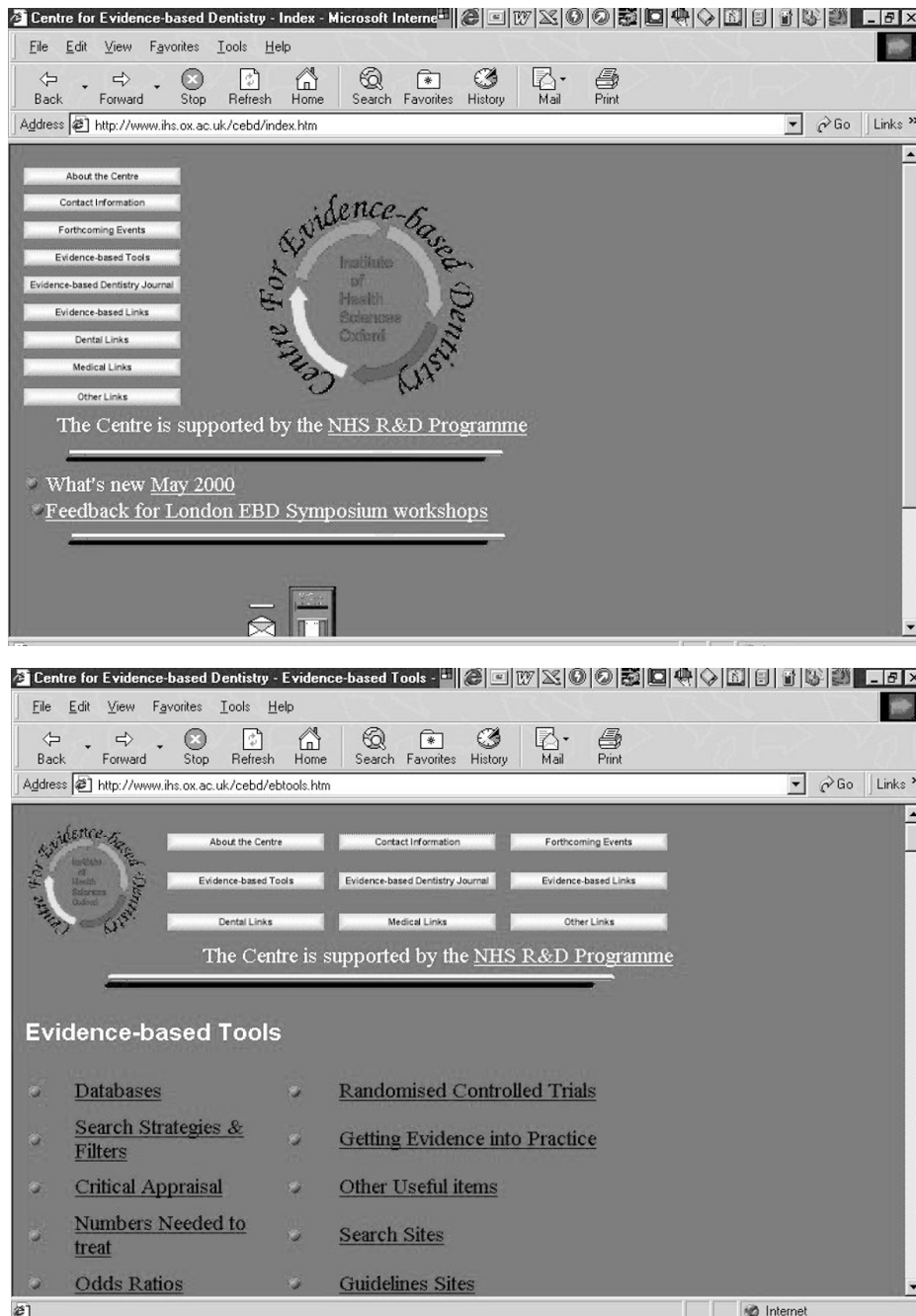


Figure 1 Pages from the Centre for Evidence-based Dentistry web site