

# New year — new volume — new look

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The *Evidence-Based Dentistry* journal has been evolving since it first appeared as a supplement to the *British Dental Journal* in November 1998. In this the first issue of Volume 4 you will notice that we have changed the interior layout of the journal. The aim of this re-design is to bring together the various elements of the journal, editorial, summaries, and tool-box in a more coherent format. The Editorial Board is very pleased with the new design and I hope that you the reader will be equally pleased. As well as the internal changes, we are also amending the title so that in future we will be using the short form of *EBD* instead of *Evidence-Based Dentistry*.

In addition to the first appearance of *Evidence-Based Dentistry*, 1998 was also an important year as it saw the *British Dental Journal* become the first dental journal to endorse the CONSORT (Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials) statement for reporting randomised controlled trials. The CONSORT statement can be found on the website [www.consort-statement.org](http://www.consort-statement.org). Also listed on this site are journals that have adopted or are considering adopting CONSORT. Sadly only three dental journals are currently listed: *British Dental Journal*, *British Journal of Orthodontics*, and *Journal of Orthodontics*. This is disappointing, for as the number of systematic reviews increase in dentistry we are increasingly seeing reported in their findings that the quality of the primary research is poor.

While in many cases this related to early dental research, the quality of more recent research has also been questioned as was emphasised in this quote from the executive summary of the systematic review of water fluoridation:<sup>1</sup>

The most serious defect of these studies was the lack of appropriate analysis. Many studies did not present an analysis at all, while others only did simple analyses without attempting to control for potentially confounding factors. While some of these studies were conducted in the 1940's and 50's, prior to the common use of such analyses, studies conducted much later also failed to use methods that were commonplace at the time of the study.

This lack of quality in primary research reporting is also highlighted in a recent systematic review of randomised controlled trials in periodontology.<sup>2</sup> If we are to improve on the quality of dental research, more emphasis needs to be placed on the use of clear guidelines for reporting studies such as those presented in CONSORT and related guidelines, QUOROM (Quality of Reporting Meta-analysis), MOOSE (Meta-analysis of Observational Studies in Epidemiology), and the STARD (Towards Complete and Accurate Reporting of Studies on Diagnostic Accuracy) initiative, all of which can be found on the CONSORT website [www.consort-statement.org](http://www.consort-statement.org).

The primary duty is on the original researchers who should be looking at

being able to fulfil the criteria required by these guidelines from the initial planning stages of their research. However, there is also a duty on editors and peer reviewers to ensure that the guidelines are followed. There is also a responsibility on the wider dental research community to take responsibility to ensure that these guidelines are taken up and enforced more widely within dental research and adopted by more dental journals. Moher et al<sup>3</sup> reported a significant increase in the quality of trial reporting in those journals adopting CONSORT over non-adopting journals, so isn't it time that the dental community followed suit?

In my editorial on the six-monthly check,<sup>4</sup> I raised the issue of whether the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) review of dental checks was completely necessary. The UK Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Review has not yet been published (website accessed 23 December). However, it is clear during the NICE review that the HTA review which was initially completed in 2001 will be taken into account and updated as part of the process. NICE will then probably issue their guidance during 2004.

1. NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination. A Systematic Review of Water Fluoridation. York: NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, University of York; 2000.
2. Montenegro R, Needleman I, Moles D, Tonetti M. Quality of RCTs in periodontology. A systematic review. *J Dent Res* 2002; 81:866-870.
3. Moher D, Jones A, Lepage L. Use of the CONSORT statement and quality of reports of randomized trials: a comparative before-and-after evaluation. *J Am Med Assoc* 285: 1992-1995.
4. Richards D. The six-monthly dental check. *Evidence-Based Dentistry* 2002; 3:61.