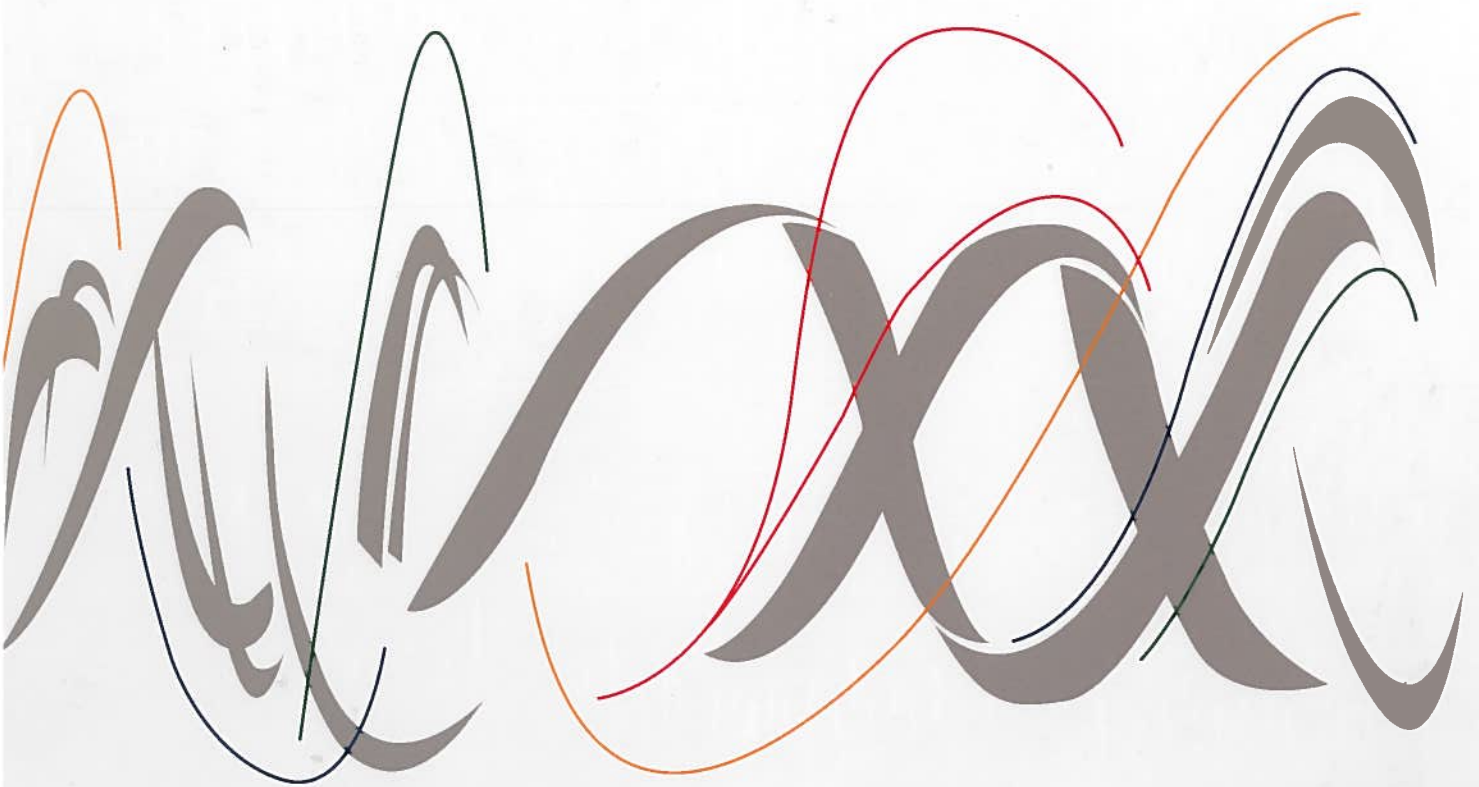


South Africa - Norway
Programme on Research Cooperation



Capacity-Building in Evidence-Based Dentistry and Clinical Practice Guidelines for A Developing Country



In 2004 Prof Christopher Owen of the School of Oral Health Sciences of the University of the Witwatersrand and Prof Asbjørn Jøkstad of the University of Oslo's Institute of Clinical Dentistry created a joint research project that was designed to offer a new and innovative approach to addressing the need of oral health education institutions to adapt to the paradigm shift required in clinical decision-making, management protocols and oral health policy based on best evidence, a shift which is vital for particularly under-developed and developing countries sporting limited resources. In this regard there is an ever-increasing need for decisions about the allocation of scarce health care resources to be made on the basis of evidence that is valid, reliable and appropriate to the populations and contexts in which these decisions are taken. Yet academics and policy-makers in developing countries have been slow to introduce this concept into the mainstream education and training process at both under- and postgraduate level - with the result that none of the international protocols designed for oral health comes

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from any of these countries - even though evidence-based clinical practice guidelines are not only structured and formal but use rigorous, explicit and reproducible methods to assemble and evaluate evidence. Nevertheless, the growing number of relevant systematic reviews undertaken in countries such as the US, the UK and Canada can assist policy-makers, clinicians and consumers worldwide in making informed decisions, even leading to developing countries taking a leading role in generating approaches to ensure professional standards of behaviour through interventions such as producing guidelines and introducing essential drug programmes, and by producing reliable research summaries to help ensure that policies are based on good evidence. To this end, and hoping to contribute to the improvement and enhancement of knowledge and ability in the field of evidence-based dentistry, the project undertaken by Profs Owens and Jokstad set itself the following specific objectives: to undertake and at the same time research a process of information dissemination and capacity-building in evidence-based dentistry in South Africa, to encourage, promote and assist with specific

intra- and inter-institutional research projects in evidence-based dentistry, to establish inter-institutional working groups for the development of clinical practice guidelines relevant to developing countries, and to identify ongoing and future cooperative research and development arenas in oral health both within South Africa and between South Africa and Norway. In this way it was hoped to provide a blue-print for the successful implementation of similar projects in developing countries around the world, and thus to render an enduring service to global oral health practice.

Sporting one article published in referee-based scientific journals and three conference or workshop presentations, the project also resulted in the establishment of the Wits Evidence-Based Collaboration in Oral Health (WEBCOH), with workshops held as part of the group's activities providing very clear recommendations and objectives for the future direction of evidence-based dentistry in South Africa.



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