

“Clinical Research is Key to My Success”

An Interview with Dr. Peter Blanchard, PEARL’s #1 Recruiter

Dr. Peter Blanchard, a member of the PEARL Network Executive Committee and Practitioner Advisory Group, and his staff have recruited 142 subjects for PEARL clinical studies - more than any other practitioner-investigator.

In this interview, Dr. Blanchard talks about the importance of clinical research to the

Oral Health Center, his dental practice in suburban Boston. The practice, which is part of the Catalyst Institute and is owned by Delta Dental of Massachusetts, has served over 11,000 patients since opening in 1999. Learn more about the Oral Health Center and the Catalyst Institute by navigating to their Web sites at www.oralhealthcenter.org and www.catalystinstitute.org.



Dr. Peter Blanchard

THE PEARL EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Ronald G. Craig, DMD, PhD; Frederick A. Curro, DMD, PhD; Van P. Thompson, DDS, PhD

www.pearlnetwork.org

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PEARL: Why is clinical research so important to your practice?

Dr. Blanchard: The Oral Health Center's mission is to create a model of cost-effective, evidence-based dental care. An evidence-based approach relies largely on scientific facts gathered from clinical research. Therefore, I rely on organizations, like the PEARL Network, that conduct clinical research on patient care problems routinely encountered in dental practice, to provide me with data that I can integrate with my clinical expertise and my patients' treatment needs and preferences.

PEARL: How do you utilize evidence-based dentistry?

Dr. Blanchard: At the Oral Health Center, we use evidence-based protocols from the start of a patient's evaluation through the completion of their treatment. We begin with a caries risk assessment – a protocol for evaluating the chance of getting caries according to scientifically-proven risk factors, including oral health symptoms, such as dry mouth, and lifestyle characteristics, such as access to fluoridated water and snacking habits. Then, we develop a treatment plan that emphasizes hygiene and prevention to minimize risk.

PEARL: Where do you find evidence-based guidelines?

Dr. Blanchard: In the past, my major sources of information were the Cochrane Collaboration, a consortium providing clinical research reviews, and the ADA, which has provided

protocols like the one we use for remineralizing lesions with chlorhexidine, xylitol (mints or gum), prescription toothpaste, and fluoride varnish as often as every three months for high-risk patients.

PEARL, which I joined in 2006, is becoming an important new source of scientific evidence that is specifically based on studies conducted in private practices. PEARL employs a professional data-analysis company, the EMMES Corporation, to gather and analyze data from practitioner-investigators like me, and to help disseminate those findings to the profession in a timely manner. To date, PEARL practitioner-investigators have completed more than 20 scientific publications and presentations.

I was pleased to learn that data I collected for PEARL studies on postoperative hypersensitivity in occlusal restorations, and outcomes of endodontic treatment and restoration, were incorporated into presentations given by PEARL at the 2008 annual meetings of the American and International Associations for Dental Research. I am confident that many practitioners will find, as I did, that this kind of research helps build a practice that successfully uses scientific evidence to provide quality patient care.

Dr. Blanchard is a practitioner-investigator on PEARL Network studies on Postoperative Hypersensitivity in Occlusal Restorations, Outcomes of Endodontic Treatment and Restoration, and Analgesic Use and Effectiveness in Dental Practice.

