Promoting the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Through Peer Review and Public Presentation

Among its many benefits, the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) provides guidelines for what we as clinical educators can do to extend our everyday work into a “scholarly” effort. Two of the four characteristics of SoTL defined in this month’s article by Lanning et al. are particularly pertinent to the Journal of Dental Education (JDE). The second characteristic specifies that “The activity generates a product that is peer-reviewed on the basis of whether it contributes new knowledge to the field and/or invites conceptual replication,” while the fourth is that “The product of and/or the activity is presented publicly for others to build upon.”

There are several ways clinical educators can contribute to SoTL. Many of us submit our work to online repositories like MedEdPORTAL, a site where peer-reviewed curriculum content is published for others to read and use. Other educators choose to share their innovations and research at the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) Annual Session & Exhibition in the form of posters, oral presentations, or workshops—all of which go through a peer review process. Although all these activities count as scholarship, the “publish or perish” mantra still rings true at some institutions, and publishing in an academic journal continues to carry added value. There are thus many reasons to consider submitting your manuscripts for publication in the JDE.

Not a semester goes by when I don’t have enthusiastic students and faculty members stop by my office with ideas about wanting to conduct educational research. Too often these ideas are based on datasets that exist (grades of students, course surveys, numbers of clinical procedures completed) and not fundamental research principles. I will oftentimes ask them questions like these: “How is your idea novel or different from what is known? What is the aim of your project? How will you go about testing your hypothesis?” These questions lead to deeper thinking and discussion about the background and significance of the project, primary and secondary outcomes, educational research design (quantitative versus qualitative, statistical analysis), and newer or different data sets or surveys to be considered. The final question is always this: “Do you want to publish your work, and which journal are you considering for the submission?” A first choice for dental educational research is generally the JDE. I will give you my admittedly biased reasons why!

The JDE on average publishes the most dental education research articles in the world (about 150 articles a year, in the top fifteen of eighty-two dental journals listed on the ISI Web of Knowledge). Our turnaround time for a review is on average less than thirty days, and the “wait time” for articles to be published once accepted is now down to about six to seven months. Our peer reviewers are experts in the areas of review and give detailed and balanced feedback that helps our authors improve their manuscripts or consider how to rethink their research if the manuscript is rejected. Although our impact factor places us at 56/82 dental journals in 2014, our Eigenfactor score places us at 39/82 dental journals. As explained on www.eigenfactor.org, “The Eigenfactor score calculation is based on the number of times articles from the journal published in the past five years have been cited in the [Thomson Scientific’s Journal Citation Reports] year, but it also considers which journals have contributed these citations so that highly cited journals will influence the network more than lesser cited journals. References from one article in a journal to another article from the same journal are removed, so that Eigenfactor scores are not influenced by journal self-citation.”

For all these reasons, SoTL research published in the JDE benefits from the constructive feedback of its editors and reviewers and from being made easily accessible to readers in dental and other health care
professions around the world to learn from and build upon. We are delighted to promote the continued development of SoTL in these key ways.

While we embrace and celebrate all forms of SoTL, we are particularly fond of any and all work in this area of research submitted to the *JDE*. The community of faculty members, administrators, residents, and students we publish are vibrant in their thoughts and observations and reflect the best of what goes on in our schools, classrooms, and preclinical and clinical arenas. Keep up the good work!