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A Review of the Fisdap Research Summit

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COMPETING INTERESTS

AMB is a member of the NAEMSE Research Committee. JB is a product owner and employee at Fisdap.

AUTHOR DECLARATIONS

The authors declare that they are responsible and accountable for the accuracy and integrity of all aspects of this work.

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What do you call a room full of research geeks? The Fisdap Research Summit!

We've returned from the frozen tundra of Minnesota after an invigorating few days of research! Jennifer works for Fisdap and served as a liaison to Alan's research group, and Alan was supported by the National Association of EMS Educators in attending the Fisdap Research Summit, hosted by HealthPartners in Minneapolis.

For the past 11 years, Fisdap has hosted the annual Research Summit, a workshop that attracts educators and clinicians from around the country. For two days, participants immerse themselves in focused research projects. The Research Summit has two primary goals: 1) to teach paramedics and paramedic educators how to conduct valid educational research, and 2) to facilitate research plans and apply real data to hypotheses so participants leave with a working, nearly finished research abstract. Since 2006, the Summit has produced 14 research awards winners, with 24 oral presentations and 32 poster presentations at the annual NAEMSE Symposium. To date, more than 160 people have graduated from the Summit program, producing hundreds of research projects over the years.

"The Fisdap Research Summit is where our mission plays out in real time. Digging deep into our data to answer questions and create the evidence needed to determine best practice makes all the hard work worthwhile," says Michael Johnson, Fisdap founder.

Educators and non-educators alike with any level of research experience (i.e., from none to PhD), are highly encouraged to attend. Alan was one of three international attendees; he attended from Canada as faculty in the paramedic programs in Fanshawe College in Ontario along with Dr. Bill Lord from University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia, and Dr. Brett Williams, Monash University, Australia—both highly published and respected paramedic researchers.

At the Summit, participants got to work on a great team with other paramedicine and education peers, editors, dedicated researchers, an amazing statistician, and a fantastic team of Fisdap computer developers who constructed queries to gather the data the groups required. The research projects undertaken this year included a mix of educational and clinical studies.

Our group elected to undertake a study on the relationship between success in unit exams and success in the final comprehensive exam. The two active versions of the Fisdap comprehensive exam have been shown to have a more than 97% positive predictive value for first-time success in the National Registry cognitive exam. A number of programs across the U.S. terminate a student from the program if they fail one unit exam. Yet, we know as educators (and from previous research undertaken at the Summit by Lawler et al.) that the single biggest influence on student's performance in comprehensive exams is exposure to patient contacts in the field (i.e., the more patients you see in the field, the better you perform on the comprehensive exam).

So... if we terminate students prior to them undertaking field placements at all, are we in fact failing potentially successful students? We won't give away the exact details of what we discovered (we'll leave that to the official abstract) but what we can tell you is that a student can fail several unit exams in a program and still be successful in the comprehensive exam—meaning you *can* fail your way to success! (Terms and conditions apply.)

Other projects undertaken at this year's Summit included an investigation into the link between neurotic behavioural traits exhibited by students in their personality test (again, using Fisdap testing products) and their likelihood to restrain (chemically or physically) a patient. Another group researched the differences in analgesia administration to older adults and ethnic minorities. Yet another group investigated the value of lab-based "patient contacts"—and surprisingly found that lab-based patient contacts actually decrease the student's likelihood of passing the comprehensive exam.

Some attendees, like Ron Lawler, are veterans of the Summit: "I continue to go to the Fisdap Research Summit for several reasons. It is a great group of people who come to Minnesota in February (think really cold) to further the profession and education of EMS. Everyone is excited about learning to do research or expanding the amount of EMS research out there. Being a group leader allows me to help guide the newcomers in research while building relationships with everyone. We are a small community, and it always helps to have someone to call for ideas."

Becky Valentine, a first time attendee at the Summit shared the following thoughts: "I am truly grateful for the opportunity to learn the research process in such a hands-on way. I am fairly well-read on EMS research, which is why I've always wanted to try it myself... but it all seemed so daunting. The assembled group at the Summit was inspiring. The Fisdap team was there to support us, and divided into groups, our teamwork resembled that of putting together a puzzle."

"Everyone came to the table with a different viewpoint and level of expertise to make it all work. My take home lesson is that no one person has to do all the work on a research project", Valentine says. "Other people with different areas of expertise are there to help. It is not as arduous as I've always thought it to be, and with luck, I'll return to attend more Fisdap Research Summits. The valuable experience exceeded my expectations by far." Becky concludes, "In any case, with more EMS related research needed to better understand how our industry acts, reacts and can improve, I plan to work on further research projects. I urge others to do the same. Developing research is not as daunting as one might think"

In addition to our group's primary research project, Alan had previously identified an area of personal interest: whether our current curricula are fit for purpose in the context of care of older adults. A number of other attendees signalled their interest in this side project, and we are now in the process of having the data extracted from the database for this study.

We are investigating the overall incidence of medical and trauma calls that occur in older adults, and then we will investigate the educational preparation paramedic students have for these presentations. Alan's hypothesis is that the proportion of calls to older adults far outweighs the proportion of time dedicated in paramedic programs to learning how to care for these patients (in proportion to other areas of the curriculum). We'll have to await the data analysis to see if he's right!

A number of attendees took the opportunity to chat with Faizan Arshad on the EMS Nation podcast, live from the Summit. We outlined several aspects of the projects as well as discussing social media and its potential effect on prehospital education. You can check out the podcast at <http://apple.co/1HDDEgW>.

A pre-summit Resuscitation Symposium was also held in conjunction with Zoll. This symposium included a review of haemodynamic monitoring and lectures on resuscitation and shock therapies. Outside of the research agenda, there was a fantastic social program, including an informal meet-and-greet, a Fisdap-sponsored group dinner, and the opportunity to go for dinner with those who were left after the Summit, as well as taking in some of the sights around Minneapolis. The opportunity to meet and network with like-minded peers made attending the Summit worthwhile on its own!

We strongly encourage all involved in EMS, be they student, clinician or educator, with an interest in EMS to consider attending the Fisdap Research Summit in the future. Keep an eye on fisdap.net/research for opening dates and application requirements. We'll leave the last word to Ron Lawler, who sums it up perfectly,

"Being a research nerd, I always leave with many more ideas for future research than I came in with.
You should try it!"

