



**DENTAL INFORMATICS
& DENTAL RESEARCH**

Making the Connection

June 12-13, 2003
Bethesda, MD



Background

Many dental researchers use computer-based tools in their work. Often, these tools do not go beyond supporting already established models, work processes and analyses. The collection of these tools and their function are commonly termed "information technology."

Informatics, however, is more than information technology. Informatics is a scientific discipline that employs methods from computer science, information science, cognitive science and telecommunications to solve problems in a specific domain (Schleyer, T, Spallek, H, Dental informatics: A cornerstone for dental practice. Journal of the American Dental Association 2001: 132 (May): 605-613.)

Medical informatics, nursing informatics and dental informatics have been developed to solve problems in health care. While the field of dental informatics has been evolving for many years, to date it has not developed a strong connection to dental and craniofacial research. This conference was designed to change that.

The invitation-only working conference "Dental Informatics and Dental Research: Making the Connection" brought together experts in biomedical informatics with dental researchers in order to identify dental research issues which might benefit from the application of new or existing informatics methods. In addition, it educated dental researchers about biomedical informatics and its capabilities, and helped the biomedical informatics community understand research problems germane to dentistry. The goals of the conference included the following:

- identifying areas/specific projects in dental research that can benefit from the application of existing informatics methods and models;
- identifying areas/specific projects in dental research that would require development of new informatics methods and models;
- increasing awareness and knowledge of biomedical informatics among dental researchers;
- fostering the development of research collaborations among attendees;
- determining strategies for how dental researchers at all levels of experience can learn most effectively about biomedical informatics and how it can help them in their work; and
- disseminating the conference results to the biomedical and the dental and craniofacial research communities at large.

To achieve the listed objectives, conference participants included senior medical informaticians, dental informaticians, and dental and craniofacial researchers with a broad range of research interests. Programmatic tracks at the conference allowed attendees to explore topics in more depth, and contributed issues and suggestions to the plenary discussions that concluded the conference.