



Sages or sirens?

Do you consider yourself a discriminating professional? From whom do you seek clinical and professional advice? Why do you try a new product or change a technique? Are the people who provide you with answers worthy of your support? Are they sages or sirens?

In her program, "Sages and sirens: Saying it is so doesn't make it so," Kristine Hodsdon, RDH, BS, asks her audiences these thought-provoking questions. Kristine defines a sage as someone who is knowledgeable and worthy enough to lead the profession in her/his area of expertise. A siren, on the other hand, is someone who has sizzle, but no steak, someone who may be popular and have name recognition, but



Hodsdon

who provides biased and opinionated information. With these questions, Kristine puts herself and the dental hygiene speaking profession in the bull's eye. In an energy-packed program, she provides audiences with a "top ten list" which enables participants to critically evaluate podium speakers' and authors' messages. Are they sages or sirens?

We all have our biases, which is not wrong. What is wrong is the failure to talk about (or hide behind) the bias.

Hygienists are expected to stay abreast of new clinical information from hundreds of studies each year. The need for a systematic approach to analyzing this information has never been greater. Kristine's program offers a review of evidence-based decision-making, and the reasons why many professionals find this to be a practical solution to information overload.

Her program is a hybrid of material. Some of the information Kristine developed, and some she received while attending an evidence-based dentistry symposium prior to an ADA annual session, sponsored by Oral-B.

She was one of more than 100 speakers, academicians, and writers who gathered to learn more about EBD. Shortly afterwards, Oral-B hired Kristine as the northeast regional manager of professional education.

After years of listening to speakers and writers talk about services or products without appropriate evidence based research or professional disclosure, Kristine became frustrated and researched the subject. While many speakers and writers give a disclosure statement, others don't. A disclosure statement acknowledges the speaker/writer/consultant's biases. We all have our biases, which is not wrong. What is

wrong is the failure to talk about (or hide behind) the bias. Kristine discloses her background, as well as past and present sponsors of her programs. Program sponsorship can vary from having a mere presence to paying for the speaker's expenses. All speakers should disclose the relationship between them and their sponsor so that participants can make informed judgments regarding a product, course, or article.

While participants may feel that many speakers don't offer anything new, Kristine encourages participants to rethink their attitudes and ask, "How can I apply what I am hearing, even if I have heard it before?"

Hygienists need to remember that "old" hygiene ideas and protocols still work and are effective. Technology and science are rapidly changing, but do dental hygienists always need the "latest and greatest" to be successful? We need to practice the fundamentals such as blood pressure and oral cancer screenings, complete medical and dental

continued on page 109

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