

Editorial

CONNECTING SCIENCE AND PRACTICE



Dr. John P. O'Keefe

Soon after I became editor, Dr. Michael Lasko, registrar of the Manitoba dental regulatory authority, advised me to work towards "connecting science and practice" as I developed the *Journal*.

At the 1999 meeting of the International Association for Dental Research, a speaker at a plenary session said that one of the greatest challenges in dentistry today is communicating scientific research findings to dental practitioners. The future credibility of the profession in the eyes of outside stakeholders may depend on practitioners making science-based clinical decisions.

Recently, Dr. Gary Derkson of Vancouver suggested to me that because health research findings are increasingly being reported in the media, the dentists of Canada need to receive background information on such issues quickly in order to answer the questions of highly educated patients. He suggested that CDA could play a valuable role in moving this information out to dentists in a timely fashion.

So, what strategies can the *Journal* use to improve the connection between science and practice?

This month we begin a new feature called Clinical Abstracts. Based on the

premise that practitioners are very busy, it is my intention to present a number of abstracts, pertinent to clinical practice, in each edition of the *Journal*. One of the crucial roles that the *Journal's* editorial consultants will play in future will be to scan the literature in their particular discipline, choose important clinical research articles that we can abstract, and write short commentaries placing these articles in context for you. CDA members will be able to order the full-text articles from the CDA Resource Centre.

To get the ball rolling, I chose to abstract some articles written by Canadians and published in other journals. I understand that Canadian academic authors want to be published in prestige specialist publications, but perhaps they might consider submitting shorter versions of their clinical research papers to JCDA that are specifically tailored to the needs of our readership. Such publication is recognized as an "acceptable secondary publication" by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. I welcome such submissions.

The principal author of a recently submitted article has agreed to my suggestion that we publish his article in an innovative fashion. Following the lead of prestigious publications like the *British Medical Journal*, we can now publish combined print/electronic articles. This involves publishing what I call a "super abstract" in the print version of the *Journal* with the full text of the article appearing only in the eJCDA.

When I spoke to the person in charge of Medline recently, he told me that this is the way of the future in biomedical publication and that many journals are lining themselves up to pursue this route. Again, the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors considers such publications to be "real publications." Canadian clinical researchers could share their findings with colleagues around the world very quickly and effectively by publishing their material in this manner.

The article in this month's edition written by Dr. Mark Fleming and Dr.

Wayne Maillet arose from a student project presented at Dalhousie University's student table clinic competition. Each school in Canada holds such a competition every year, and many of the projects deal with subjects of great topical importance to practitioners.

Having judged the Dentsply/CDA Student Table Clinic Competition for the past two years, I know that the standard of these student projects is very high. I would love to receive submissions of clinical research articles and literature reviews arising out of those student projects. Perhaps we could persuade some generous organization to put up a prize for the best articles written by undergraduate and postgraduate students and published in JCDA?

Canada's dental schools organize high-quality continuing education programs for practitioners. Many of these programs are delivered by members of faculty. I would like to invite these faculty members to submit clinical articles to JCDA based on the topics they are presenting in their continuing education programs. These articles would promote the CE courses offered by the schools and would provide our readers with valuable up-to-date clinical information.

One of the presenters at the recent CDA convention in Halifax discussed with me the idea of submitting to the JCDA a clinical article supplemented by a video and slides. I encouraged this presenter to submit his material because our electronic *Journal* now has the capability to run such a multimedia presentation.

The key concepts underpinning the workings of the JCDA of the 21st century are responsiveness, flexibility, coordination, innovation and credibility. To meet our goals, the *Journal* will work ever closer with the Resource Centre and the scientific committees at CDA to satisfy your clinical information needs. We will use all communications media available to get reliable scientific information to you before you realize you need it. Now there's an ambitious objective!

John O'Keefe
1-800-267-6354, ext. 2297
jokeefe@cda-adc.ca