

Editorial

WE NEED YOUR INPUT TO HELP US IMPROVE



Dr. John P. O'Keefe

Are the *JCDA* and *Communiqué* useful resources for you? Do you like the way in which they are evolving? Do you have suggestions for making them better? There are so many questions we would like to ask you so that we can continue to make our publications as good as they can be. To seek answers to these questions, we are including a readership survey questionnaire with this edition of the *Journal* for Canadian dentists to complete.

While we consulted with a limited number of readers, authors and advertisers prior to making changes to our publications over the past three years, the last full-blown readership survey was conducted in 1994. A lot of water has passed under the bridge since then. The *Journal* has been redesigned, the electronic versions of the *JCDA* and *Communiqué* have been launched, and the contents of both publications have been modified somewhat. Before we make

further changes, we want your guidance.

At this stage I want to summarize the thinking underlying the changes made over the past few years. Working on the assumption that we produce both a journal and a newsletter, I believe these two publications should each have a separate focus and mission. The *Journal* is designed to focus on science-based clinical decision making, and the presentation and discussion of major issues impacting the dental profession. *Communiqué* is designed to focus on the private interests of dentist members of CDA.

Communiqué is thus the vehicle of choice for news about CDA and matters pertaining to practice management and personal finances. I believe in making publications as readable as possible, because our readers are constantly inundated with reading material. I also think it is important to develop a capacity to electronically transfer information, because sooner or later much of scientific information will be transferred by electronic media. Most dentists have access to the Internet, and students are increasingly using computers in their professional education.

The *Journal* retains a section dedicated to publishing clinical research. In consulting with other dentists I hear that many don't want to read the full text of most research articles. Yet it is important for authors that their work appears in a scientific publication. To bridge the gap between these two needs, we have introduced the format where a one-page summary of a research article appears in the print version of the *Journal*, while the full text is available in the online version.

The paper version of the *Journal* contains shorter articles and abstracts for the purpose of creating "an easier read," while the reader is increasingly referred to the online *Journal* or the CDA Resource Centre for further information. I believe it is time to get feedback from as many readers as possible about the soundness of these approaches.

Please feel free to use this survey to express your most strongly held views.

Having developed a thick skin in this position over the past couple of years, I want to hear the rough with the smooth, assuming that the criticism aims at helping us improve our products. To maintain the confidentiality of participants and to ensure the survey is conducted in an objective manner, we have engaged the services of an outside research agency (The Summit Strategy Group of Toronto).

There are different versions of the survey, depending on whether you receive *Communiqué* or not. We are also asking francophone readers a couple of specific questions relating to the presentation of material in the French editions of our publications. We predict that it will take you approximately 20 minutes to complete the survey.

To make returning the questionnaire easy for you, we have provided a pre-paid postage envelope along with the survey. Given that it is very easy for questionnaires and envelopes to get lost on the desk of a busy dentist, we are offering some inducements to readers who return their completed questionnaires early. We are offering a copy of the *Compendium of Pharmaceuticals and Specialties* for the first dozen completed questionnaires.

We know that you are extremely busy and that you have a pile of reading material on your desk. We also know that you are being polled left, right and centre for your opinions about this, that and the other topic. Notwithstanding this, we would really appreciate it if you could make time to give us your thoughts about the current status and future direction of our publications. The effort that you put into responding to this survey will be reflected in improvements to our publications. Our continuing commitment is to develop the publications over time to reflect the needs of the dentists of Canada.

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