

Editorial

WHAT MAKES YOU TICK?



Dr. John P. O'Keefe

Some dentists (members and non-members of CDA) say they are unaware of the programs and services offered by our national association. As the person responsible for the contents of *JCDA*, *Communiqué* and CDA's Web site, I am challenged to understand why this should be the case. I must find ways to remedy this state of affairs.

In this context, I have been asked to review our communications vehicles by mid-year. To complete this review, I need your feedback. I need to be able to get inside the minds of Canadian dentists to understand the factors that facilitate and hinder the successful transmission of CDA's published information.

One can speculate that many Canadian dentists are so busy that they do not have time to read our publications, especially in this era of information overload. Some dentists may not

even look at them, because they find the format or the contents less attractive or interesting than they would like. Others may get all the information they need from credible alternative sources — perhaps via colleagues or other publications. The fascinating challenge we face at CDA is to get beyond speculation and generate the evidence upon which to base future decisions relating to two-way communication with the profession.

My resolve to get to the bottom of this issue has been strengthened by my recent attendance at 2 workshops in Ottawa; both were in the field of knowledge translation — the process of delivering information to intended recipients in its proper context and in a format that is both understandable and usable. Intended for use by health professionals and the public, this information must be packaged differently for different target groups.

Health Canada's Therapeutic Products Directorate organized the first of these workshops; it related to the two-way communication of information about adverse drug reactions. This is a subject of clear importance to dentists. You can find more information about the latest developments in this field at <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/protection/warnings.html>.

The second workshop was organized by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), which has a clear mandate to disseminate research findings to the Canadian taxpayers who fund the Institutes and to the professionals whose practice behaviour is expected to change as a result of receiving this new information. You can find out more about CIHR's activities at www.cihr.ca.

The big message for me at both workshops is that anybody attempting to deliver information to any target group whatsoever must have a profound understanding of the

information needs of that group, how they like to receive information, and in what format. We are moving into the era where information must be pertinent, timely and delivered in as customized a fashion as resources will allow, or else publications will be completely ignored.

To start us along the road to meeting these goals, we will be asking you a series of questions about your preferences regarding the receipt and use of professionally related information in a survey to be included with next month's *JCDA*. I alert you well in advance, so that you can get your thinking caps on. I ask your indulgence, because you are being requested to complete a number of questionnaires delivered with *JCDA* between December 2001 and March 2002.

In this current edition, we are facilitating our supporters in the Dental Industry Association of Canada by distributing their 6th Annual Future of Dentistry survey. You have obliged our friends in the CIHR by completing, in large numbers, their survey delivered with the December 2001 edition. Next month, we hope that you will help us to help you, when half of our readers will be asked to complete a readership survey and the other half will be asked to give us your opinions about how CDA can serve you better.

Please don't run away when we ask you to complete these questionnaires. Without knowing your distinct preferences, we cannot deliver pertinent, timely services and information to make your practice and our profession more successful. Of course, you know that you are always welcome to give me your insights about how to improve our publications through my contact coordinates below. Thank you for your help.

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