

Guest Editorial

FROM PRACTICE TO PUBLICATION



Dr. Bruce R. Pynn

Textbooks have historically served as a major professional reference and information source. However, by the publication date much of the information contained in a textbook may no longer be current. The unfortunate reality is that new and important information can take years before it is finally published in this format.

Indeed, if it were not for the existence of peer-reviewed professional journals, many of our innovative techniques might have taken an inordinate amount of time to become incorporated into our armamentarium. Prime examples of this include the pioneering work of Robert Hall (1959), who reported on the beneficial effect of the high-speed turbine unit for bone removal in a variety of oral and maxillofacial surgical procedures; the research of William Bell (1975), whose anatomic studies formed the biological basis for our modern advanced orthognathic surgical techniques; and the innova-

tive surgical techniques for treating mandibular fractures described by Edward Ellis (1993). Unquestionably, peer-reviewed publications represent one of the most effective means of communicating pertinent and timely information to dental specialists and generalists alike.

In the past 2 decades, major changes have taken place in general and specialized dentistry. Much of the early oral surgery literature dealt with basic exodontia, removal of wisdom teeth, maxillofacial trauma, infections, cysts and tumours. More recently, there has been a shift in emphasis to orthognathic and reconstructive surgery, temporomandibular joint surgery, implants, distraction osteogenesis, endoscopic procedures and esthetic surgery. These changes in surgical focus demonstrate how our specialty uses basic information gleaned from publications to develop and implement new surgical procedures. This principle is illustrated in this edition of *JCDA* by Dr. David Walker, who describes a case involving bilateral intraoral distraction osteogenesis, and by Drs. Friedlich and Rittenberg, who report on a case in which a bur fragment was retrieved from the maxillary sinus of a patient using an endoscopic technique. Both papers demonstrate how the authors' experience became the source of interesting and useful information, worthy of being shared with colleagues.

In Canada, we are fortunate to have internationally recognized oral and maxillofacial surgeons such as Dr. David Precious at Dalhousie University and Drs. Simon Weinberg and George Sándor at the University of Toronto, all of whom are regular contributors to the dental literature. However, our dental specialists and generalists should not have to depend solely upon our academic institutions as the primary source of contributors

to the professional literature. With more than 18,000 practising dentists and dental specialists throughout the country, there must be an abundance of interesting material from which we could all benefit. This information can be published and there are people willing to help practitioners bring this worthwhile material through to publication.

I vividly recall the trepidation that I experienced when preparing my first article in consideration for publication. Years later, I still feel anxious each time I submit an article, but my anxieties are tempered with a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment. These feelings compel me to continue to submit articles.

There is no more noble pursuit than the sharing of knowledge amongst professional colleagues. In this regard, I would encourage practitioners engaged in private practice to share their expertise, knowledge and interesting cases, so that we may all learn from each other. Dr. Daniel Laskin, editor emeritus of the *Journal of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery*, once stated that "through such sharing of knowledge everyone benefits, because it leads to closer cooperation between specialties and the dental community at large, ultimately leading to better patient care." Teachable moments happen every day in our practices. Take advantage of these moments by writing them down, researching and refining your ideas and submitting a paper to a journal. By doing so, you will not only help to enlighten your colleagues, but more importantly, your efforts may eventually translate into improved patient care.

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