



Dr. James Lund

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McGill Dentistry: A Remarkable Rejuvenation

This special issue of *JCDA* contains a series of clinical articles written by McGill faculty and students, along with 3 features on our teaching, research and outreach activities that summarize the transformations brought about by the redesign of our mission and programs some 12 years ago. I believe we were very lucky that the Institute of Medicine (IOM), one of the U.S. National Academies of Sciences, published an analysis of the state of dental education and research just as we began this task.

The IOM report stated that “dentistry will and should become more closely integrated with medicine and the health care system at all levels: education, research and patient care.” It made a series of recommendations on how this could be achieved, and we were able to incorporate most of these strategies within our new curriculum as well as our research, patient care and community outreach programs.

Most dental schools claim to train “physicians of the mouth,” but very few offer comprehensive training in biomedical sciences and basic medicine. We achieve this by combining the first 4 semesters of the dental and medical programs. Our students acquire the basic knowledge that underlies health care, the shift toward personalized treatment and the use of radical biotechnologies. They also learn the fundamentals of good clinical practice and patient management along with their medical colleagues. The 2 groups of students learn to work together, improving interprofessional communication and the integration of oral and general health care.

The feature on innovative teaching summarizes key changes made to the preclinical and clinical phases of the DMD program. Dr. Marie Dagenais describes the goals of the program, the new teaching methods and technologies being applied, and how the program evolves in response to new evidence on oral health, disease

processes and treatment efficacy. The clinical article on blended learning in orthodontics by Dr. Jean-Marc Retrouvey and his collaborator, Mr. Adam Finkelstein, describes in more detail the interactive, computer-based teaching techniques currently in development that use “virtual patients.”

While virtual patients may be useful for teaching, it is real people who need care and none more so than those at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder. The feature on community outreach describes the efforts of McGill professors who have been working with the Quebec government and the dental profession to try to improve access to care for those most in need. Another dedicated group has established mobile outreach clinics in collaboration with community organizations in Montreal and abroad. DMD students from all 4 years provide care, while interacting with the 40%–50% of the population who do not have a regular family dentist.

The feature on McGill’s research revolution describes the transformation of a faculty threatened with closure because of low research productivity into a research-intensive institution. We compensated for our small size by collaborating with the faculties of medicine, science and engineering to develop 4 key areas of research that are important for the future of dentistry: clinical research, pain research, bone and periodontal research, and biomaterials and tissue engineering.

The influence of our student researchers is apparent in 3 clinical articles found in this issue. Two articles are co-authored by dental students from the University of Montreal who did their summer research on the transfer of new technologies within dentistry under the supervision of McGill professor Dr. Jocelyne Feine. The other clinical article, on the relationship between computer use and temporomandibular disorders, was based on the summer project of Dr. Romina Perri, a recent McGill graduate.

Finally, I would like to thank *JCDA* for giving us this opportunity to connect with our alumni and to introduce ourselves to the Journal’s worldwide readership. More information about our faculty can be found at www.mcgill.ca/dentistry.

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