

President's Column

ON TRAVEL AND OTHER THOUGHTS...



Dr. Alfred Dean

In keeping with one of the great Canadian summertime traditions, I have been on a bit of a road trip lately.

As part of my duties as CDA president, I recently attended provincial meetings in Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. At every meeting I saw the same thing; dentists coming together for a cause they believe in — the dental profession.

I saw older dentists mentoring younger dentists. I saw families enjoying each others' company. In spite of differences of opinion on the meeting floor, I saw people socializing together. I was welcomed with open arms and included in all discussions. Most of all, I saw people having a lot of fun.

I attended the annual meeting of the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD) in July. In discussions with the Canadian section of the AGD, we acknowledged our specific roles and responsibilities in organized dentistry.

We recognized the need for interaction and acknowledged that we have different niches to fill. We discussed the fact that there are benefits to all levels of organized dentistry and identified areas where we could work together.

One of the representatives from Ontario told me how happy he was with the work being done by CDA. He was particularly impressed with the recent National Oral Health Month campaign, in which we partnered with Colgate. He stressed how meaningful this was to his practice and his patients. As a person actively involved in the AGD, he recognizes the importance of all levels of organized dentistry.

Of the AGD's 36,000 members, 1,300 dentists are from Canada — including dentists from Quebec. On September 24, 2004, barring an unforeseen miracle, the Quebec Dental Surgeons Association (QDSA) will be expunged from the CDA by-laws. As a result of a decision taken by their leadership, the QDSA will no longer be a corporate member of CDA.

It boggles my mind that a large group of Canadian dentists will not be represented at the national level. It would be easy to say, "Well, it's the same old Canadian story of the 2 solitudes — it's the language and cultural differences." I don't believe it. I believe it is politics, pure and simple.

The dentists of Quebec have the same professional concerns as other dentists in Canada. Have Quebec dentists been lulled into believing that they practise in a vacuum with no influence from the outside world? What about educational and accreditation issues? What about federal government lobbying?

In July, I attended a joint meeting between the officers and staff of CDA and the American Dental Association. The discussions were 2-way in nature,

with input provided equally from both parties. We discussed many areas of joint concern. These included, but were not limited to, the immigration and certification of foreign-trained dentists, different models for delivering dental services, and international issues related to dentistry at the FDI. I was proud to be representing the members of CDA.

Aren't the topics we discussed at the joint meeting of concern to Quebec dentists? How will dentists in Quebec have a voice at the international level on professional issues being discussed around the world? Right now, the profession in Canada is preparing a new strategic plan for CDA. It would be a far better process if the dentists of Quebec could be present to have their opinions heard.

CDA has a history of being inclusive. Our bilingual publications are a great example. The Board of Directors is always looking for ways to make the organization more relevant to all dentists in Canada.

We must stop thinking of ourselves as individual entities and start recognizing that we are each part of a bigger whole. The profession will only progress if we work together. Canadian dentistry will only progress when all provincial and territorial associations come together under the CDA banner. This does not mean that CDA is superior to other organizations. It simply means that for concerns of a national or international nature, which require input from all parties, CDA is the strongest voice for Canadian dentists.

We need your help. Please help us.

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