



Dr. John P. O'Keefe

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JCDA Celebrates Dental Students

There is a belief among some people of my vintage that the younger generation has “gone to the dogs.” Older professionals sometimes tell me that younger dentists and dental students don’t seem to have the same ethical standards and work ethic as their elders. I have always found these arguments hard to accept because of my experience meeting with my younger colleagues. I believe today’s dental students are as good a group of young professionals as you could find anywhere.

The achievements of some of these dental students are prominent in this edition of *JCDA*. On the cover we feature Kevin Chien-Hsun Lee of the University of British Columbia, who won the CDA/Dentsply Student Clinician Research Award in Vancouver this past March. This prestigious competition attracted high-calibre entries from 8 Canadian dental schools. As I read through the abstracts (p. 495) I was really impressed by how relevant, topical and practical these research projects are. For example, Mr. Lee’s project on the use of fluorescence visualization in the detection of oral cancer lesions that have a high risk of recurrence is a matter of great importance to Canadian dentists.

In the news article, Kevin indicates that he is enthusiastic about continuing to conduct research throughout his career. This spark for research has obviously been kindled in runner-up Audrey McNamara of the University of Toronto, who also won this competition in 2008. I am very encouraged that these bright and intelligent colleagues feel so passionate about advancing the knowledge base of our profession.

Another University of Toronto student, Alison Sigal, writes in this month’s Debate & Opinion section (p. 517). Alison’s passion is for improving access to oral health care for some of Canada’s most vulnerable groups—special needs patients with physical and intellectual disabili-

ties. She and a group of fellow students actually want to do something tangible about this issue. These students have set up a non-profit organization called Oral Health, Total Health to help raise awareness about the importance of oral health in patients with special needs. In her article, Alison proposes that students in other dental schools across Canada become involved with these initiatives to help raise their comfort level treating patients with special needs.

I had the privilege to meet Alison recently and I couldn’t help but think I was speaking to a future leader of our profession. She is certainly a powerful advocate for oral health for vulnerable Canadians. Given that CDA is focusing on knowledge and advocacy as the tools to guide our profession to its 3 strategic goals (a healthy public, a united community and a strong profession), we need to encourage young people like Kevin, Audrey and Alison to become involved in organized dentistry.

This notion was crystallized for me recently when I attended an inspiring talk at McGill University by Dr. Bruce Graham, a Canadian who is dean of the College of Dentistry at the University of Illinois at Chicago. In front of students and faculty members, Dr. Graham praised the major contributions of organized dentistry to programs and scholarship funds at his school, which ensure the education of a diverse dental profession. Dr. Graham told the audience that he actively encourages his students to become involved in organized dentistry, to help them learn the skills of advocacy and leadership that are required to advance our profession.

I know that working together, Canadian dental schools and organized dentistry in Canada can harness the talents of our bright students to develop these crucial skills. Along these lines, *JCDA* will be inviting a group of students to help us design the “*JCDA* of the future,” one that is a compelling source of credible and important clinical information as they move through the early part of their careers. We also extend an open invitation to students to develop their communication skills by sending us their submissions. There is always room in *JCDA* for fresh new perspectives, and in that spirit, we look forward to our young colleagues showcasing their enthusiasm for our profession in our pages.

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