

Good science

This issue of the Journal highlights a number of important considerations: new technology; hard times; know yourself; how to take photographs, collect data and how to protect our finances.

President Obama is in office in the US. He has the expectations of the world on his shoulders. He had the common sense and bravery to come out and say "shame on bankers' bonuses" awarded in 2008 in this difficult time and we need to say the same to some of the practices that have been allowed to prosper. The Celtic Tiger has passed but the money wasted/lost is frightening. Hopefully Senator Mitchell can work his miracles in the Middle East and broker a peace. Dr Brennan (p6) talks about "Hard times ahead". This is for all in dentistry and with only 33% of patients attending a dental practitioner, the loss in tax relief is likely to make this considerably worse. The IDA (p8) continues its conversations with the Joint Committee on Health and Children and highlights the shortage of Public Health Dentists. It is expected that the National Oral Health Strategy will look at this and make recommendations on how this service might be helped.

Screening, and digital recording

There is a place for oral health screening in the dental environment, in particular oral cancer screening (p10) and it is disappointing that earlier literature indicates that the medical practitioner without any oral/mouth examination training refers more oral cancers than the dental practitioner. The present education and training of our young dental graduates and future CDE courses might enable our dental colleagues to link up with their local medical practitioners to assess some of those unusual oral conditions that are confusing to medical practitioners, improve dental attendance and then refer on to the oral cancer specialist if necessary. This is the only chance to improve outcome for this easily visible tumour. The development of such a relationship can only improve the standing of dentistry and enable easy access to local medical advice on that patient with the 'raised blood pressure'.

Complete digital recording of models (p14) by ESM Digital Solutions (Dr Stephen Gallagher/Mark Barry) is a must read. No more models to store and easy access when required. This might be read in conjunction with "Let's get digital" by Rita Bauer (p44-48). I heard Rita in Wexford and her advice is clear, concise and I am off to buy a camera. David McDonald's scientific paper "Factors to consider in the transition to digital radiological imaging" (pp26-34) further highlights the technological advances, the value of computer recording vs. the storage of x-rays and the ability to communicate easily with other practitioners. Printing out on good photographic stock prevents the loss of radiographs when we send our patients for an opinion. Infection control is a must.

The EU, our awards, and a great deal more

The European section highlights the *EU Manual of Dental Practice* (p19), which is available on the CED website. This book tells us what

we need to know and regulations on how to practice in any of the 32 European countries. Look what it says about Ireland!

The Sensodyne Sensitive Dentist Award for 2008 (pp21-23) was a great success. Congratulations to the winners and thanks to the judges and Sensodyne. Everybody looks so young. I will have to change my toothpaste or resign as Editor.

The award also reflects our feature "Logic, behaviour and dentistry" with Dr Tony Humphreys (pp24-25) on his views on life. Read his book, *The power of negative thinking*. I heard him in Wexford at the Conference. He is an inspiring person and highlights the importance of combining the 'heart and the head' to get the best for ourselves and through that, our family and patients.

Supernumerary teeth (pp35-37) in a confined population (Cork and Kerry) in 1996 highlights the high incidence of these teeth in this population. This is a further audit by the same author (Ian O Dowling) and highlights changes over a period of time and reminds us of the risks of supernumerary teeth. It is a very nice study and again stresses the importance of good data collection to allow these types of studies/audits to be undertaken.

Results of a peer review process: the distribution of codes by examining dentists in the Republic of Ireland 2006-2007 (pp38-40) is a very nice audit on what has been happening in the DTSS. It highlights good practice and probity in the group assessed. It shows the cost per treatment received (p39). On average it is €54 per treatment. This might explain some of the problems and why patients find it difficult to obtain this treatment. Dentists have to pay for premises, nurses, and other outlays.

This *Journal's* abstracts (pp42-43) are again very broad in their coverage, highlight important areas for us to look at and may encourage us to undertake these assessments in our own clinics.

The *Journal* started on "Hard times ahead" and John O'Connor's piece on "Are you ready for that rainy day" (pp50-51) is an excellent bit of sound advice for all of us to heed. He gives two case studies for us to look at and even for those of us with no head for figures, it is understandable.

I learnt an awful lot from reading this Journal and I am already looking forward to the next issue.



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