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From the Editor's Desk

Newsletter to him and his beloved family for giving me this opportunity to prepare my maiden Newsletter.

The response and contribution of articles to the Federation are variable. National dental associations (NDA) has not been encouraging. However, I view this as my inexperience in presenting to them the nature of articles I needed for this Newsletter. The onus is on me to present an outline and then followed by requesting for the necessary information to achieve this end. I would like this as a learning curve and hopefully I could write better in the coming issues.

It was once said, “The future is here; it’s just not widely distributed yet.”

My thoughts on the ADTA Study

Nearly two years ago, the American Dental Trade Association (ADTA) undertook a rigorous study to better understand the market trends for the dental industry. I thought it would be helpful to share the highlights of the ADTA study with all of you. These high-light points to a considerable degree of change occurs in technology, changes in the marketplace, and changes in the economic trends of dental care. These changes would have a considerable impact on the subject topic of Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

From an economic context, the ADTA project suggests future changes will move at a considerably different pace. Today, more than half of the economic value of dental care comes from procedures and treatments that were not available 20 years ago. With shifting interests on the part of patients, evolving technology, and changes in delivery factors continuing to emerge, it seems reasonable to expect a future marketplace that is not revolutionary but change. Future trends promise to reflect the momentum of the past in combination with the less clear forces of the future, such as consumer behaviour and technology.

While it is clear that change is occurring, and that change will continue throughout our industry — the systemic nature of the supply and demand forces will make for a complex and dynamic picture. Technology will interact with disease patterns; dental workforce issues will interact with patient behaviour; practice models will interact with service choice; and demographics will interact with capacity issues. All together, whether gradual or radical, change is certain. Both providers and the industry as a whole can influence this evolution by encouraging new service choices, practice models, technologies, access points, and staffing concepts.

The ADTA report predicts a very optimistic future. The College alluded to the range of scenarios available to take the dental industry from gradual erosion to extraordinary growth. With leadership at the provider and industry level, the ADTA report suggests a very optimistic future. In fact, the study concludes that the dental-care system will evolve more in the next 20 years than in the previous 50 years! Market activity in the aggregate could be more than double—eventually.

For that reason, the next quarter century might best be described as “transitional”. While the ADTA report supports a positive future, it also adds the qualifier that the market must be willing to embrace growth and change. Better policy moves and focused leadership at every level, in every sector, can ensure a promise of effective, innovative dental-care services for the entire population.

That said, I leave you with the words of Mahatma Gandhi: “We must become the change we want to see.”

A brief history of the APDF

By the 5th congress which was held in Tokyo in 1957 some 12 years later it was officially named the Asia Pacific Dental Federation with a new constitution reflecting its regional representation. Australia became its eleventh member followed by New Zealand its 12th member. Because of its regional outlook the APDF became effectively the Regional Organisation of FDI and APRO. It was conceptualized not as a bricks and mortar organisation but rather a professional body linked to APDF/APRO to serve the organized dentistry through their various fields of dentistry. It aimed to undertake this task by continuing dental education programmes, specific courses and to bring continuing dental education in this region as its top priority. (Incidentally the world body has 5 regional organisations and APDF/APRO is one of them.)

The Federation steadily grew with Congresses being held approximately every 3 years interval. Getting member countries to host the Congress was a daunting task and the intervals between Congresses had to be stretched out. By the 10th Congress held in Singapore in 1980 the Asia Pacific Dental Congress became a major dental event in the Asian Federation’s calendar of events. That congress, held in Singapore recorded the participation of 1,276 delegates from 54 countries and a large dental trade exhibition called “Expo Asia ’81” that had 168 international exhibitors and manufacturers from 19 countries in a floor space of 55,000 sq feet (approx. 5,000 m2). Additionally another 2,300 trade visitors came to view the latest in the dental industry at Expo Asia ’81. It warranted a resounding success and changed the outlook of the organization with many countries now wanting to host this event.

On from the APF Congresses reality of today’s congresses and dental trade exhibitions are held yearly in member countries with the country/hosts working on the basis of current momentum to host this prestigious event.

For as an International College of Continuing Dental Education (ICCID) the educational component of APF/APRO was set up during the 15th Asia Pacific Dental Congress held in Manila, Philippines in 1995. It was conceptualized not as an bricks and mortar college but a virtual college linked to APF/APRO to serve the profession and the people in this region by focusing on upgrading the professional development of general dentists and specialists in various fields of dentistry. It aimed to undertake this task by continuing dental education programmes, specific courses and to bring continuing dental education in every corner of this vast region. It has the task of upgrading practice and competency of dentists and specialists.

To this end the College has conducted joint scientific programmes in member countries. Organised workshops and is responsible for all the scientific programmes in the Asia Pacific Dental Congresses for 1995 onwards. The College also awards Fellowships based on dedicated service to the profession and organized dentistry through their individual Associations or through activities of APF/APRO. Fellowship could also be awarded by attending accredited courses and having satisfied the criteria, knowledge gained etc the candidates become entitled to sit for an examination conducted by the College. On passing a Fellowship will be awarded.

Today the Federation (APF/APRO) serves its member associations well and is a truly useful umbrella organization of this region. Its annual congresses are leading events in the region attracting both the industry and delegates. The College has continued to evolve with a number of continuing dental education programmes being conducted in the region. It maintains high standards in the scientific programmes of the Asia Pacific Congresses.

From a beginning of 52 dentists from 8 countries today Asia Pacific Dental Federation/Asia Pacific Regional Organisation and its educational component ICCID officially represents 27 countries with annual congresses attracting thousands of dentists each time it is held. There are no lack of hosts and countries’ invitations extend to 5 consecutive years ahead of time.

Both the APF/APRO and its educational component ICCID are well structured organisations. They are truly the voice of dentistry and dental health and continuing dental education in this region.