

Editorial

EXPERIMENT AND INNOVATE OR DIE



Dr. John P. O'Keefe

Please don't adjust your set! The content line-up for this month's *JCDA* is an experiment — perhaps a one-off. While for much of the past 6 years, I have made a clear distinction between the contents of *JCDA* and *Communiqué*, our members-only newsletter, the paper version of this edition is like a mixture of the content of both publications. In fact, we won't be publishing a November-December edition of *Communiqué* this year.

The line-up for this edition is comprised of 5 “scholarly” articles; the full text appears only in the electronic version of *JCDA*, with 1-page summaries in the paper version. The additional clinical features in this edition of the paper version are the shorter and more practically focused features we recently introduced: *Clinical Showcase*, *Point of Care*,

Clinical Abstracts and *Diagnostic Challenge*.

Because the abridged versions of the scholarly articles take up only 5 pages of print, space is freed up for other material. We have chosen to provide an extended CDA news section that highlights some of the organization's initiatives and successes over the past year. We also give an insight into where the organization is going in the year ahead. This content would normally fit in the *Annual Review* edition of *Communiqué*.

I recognize that mixing content genres like this is risky, especially when readers tell us they want *JCDA* to be more clinically focused. Many have told us they don't want to read about political matters. Yet, we find ourselves in a dilemma as an organization: often, Canadian dentists tell us that they don't know CDA's agenda. Potential members in particular tell us this. Our idea with this edition, which is circulated to all dentists in Canada, is to make that agenda clear for those who are interested in knowing about it.

Inspired by a small book called *Crisis in Communication* penned in 1965 by a former editor of *The Lancet*, I wanted to conduct this experiment for some time. In the book, author Sir Theodore Fox opines that there are 2 kinds of biomedical publication: the journal of record and the biomedical newspaper. The communication crisis alluded to in the book's title is caused by the fact that publishers fail to recognize that the classic “journal” is really a publication aimed at researchers and academics, while the biomedical newspaper is sought by the vast majority of busy practitioners.

Back in 1965, Sir Theodore recommended that research articles should appear in 2 formats: a summary version for practitioners and a full version for researchers who might want to replicate the study. Today's

information technology allows us to publish the full text of such articles in the electronic version of the publication, with a summary in the paper version. The edition of *JCDA* you now hold in your hands is thus a biomedical newspaper (in Sir Theodore's terms), while the electronic version is effectively the journal of record.

Clearly, I look forward to hearing what you think of this experiment. It is very important to me that we provide Canadian dentists with high-quality information that is timely and pertinent to daily practice. For this goal, my mantra is “answer the questions the dentists of Canada are asking.”

But, as I understand it, we have another goal with our publication, which is to develop and edify our profession by disseminating knowledge of a scholarly nature. Ours is a knowledge-based profession. Professional journals (which have a format defined by certain rules) are still a recognized means of profession enhancement. This explains our continued publication of a journal. Of course, this begs the question: “Is this a business that CDA should be in?”

Whatever business CDA is in now is bound to change in the years ahead. Our association is in a state of transition and all our products and services, publications included, need to be guided by a spirit of innovation in order to provide value to members in a changing world. Keeping close to and listening to the opinions of our members are vital in creating a successful and innovative organization. Please tell me what you think of this particular experiment.

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