

### Looking Ahead III. One Prediction We Should Have Made for this New Century

[Continued from Volume 6, No. 1, January 2000]

▶ The specialty of prosthodontics may “dry up” in this century! The specialty of prosthodontics might now be “dead on arrival!”

This is serious business! Do any of us care? We’ve got ours. We’re established and hitting the marks we want to hit. We’re contributing: attending our meetings, teaching a bit, lecturing to the general dentists when asked, doing some miraculous restorations, and going back and forth to our offices minding our own business! What’s the problem??

**The problem is we are not addressing our problem!**

**To review, ProsStars emphasized in:**

- **July 1996** our special skills and knowledge, and why there is trouble seeing ourselves as specialists.
- **October 1996** the Educational Policy Subcommittee of The American College of Prosthodontists’ report on The Institute of Medicine Study of Dental Education. Remember:
  - ▶ their confusion when they saw the specialist in prosthodontics as a “primary care dentist?”
  - ▶ their inability to clarify how faculty in advanced education programs in prosthodontics should be adequately compensated?
  - ▶ how they may have mistakenly concluded that we were dealing with a stagnant curricula in our specialty training programs?
  - ▶ how they discovered that a supply of funds and patients for training programs is a necessity? Really!
  - ▶ how *ProsStars* pointed out that there might be some conflicts of interest when dental educators evaluate themselves; and that there might be some problems when specialists in schools have to defend the causes of the specialties when the administrators in schools are general dentists?
- **April 1997** that dental school resources may not fairly be distributed to the specialty training program, especially when the specialty program lies under the discipline (departments of restorative dentistry).

We wondered why our literature doesn’t direct itself to articles saying the specialty better solves the most complicated of prosthodontic problems; rather than overweighting itself with articles related to dental materials?

And finally, we wondered why moneys in the Foundations of prosthodontic organizations aren’t being used primarily for scholarships, recruitment and direct support of training programs?
- **October 1997** that it might be ill advised for The American College of Prosthodontists to hire a Chicago communications firm to develop a marketing theme for *cont to page 2*

“prosthodontics.” The word “specialty” (the specialty of prosthodontics) was not seen anywhere in the projected ACP public awareness campaign .

And the age-old problem of “disidentifying” ourselves as specialists by expanding and changing the membership categories of the College was again challenged by *ProsStars* as a continuing bad idea.

- **January 1998** that advanced education programs in prosthodontics, the training programs so vital to the life of our specialty, are in jeopardy! Drs. Taylor, Landesman, Holtan, Morgano and Goldstein addressed their common themes of falling applicant pools, reliance on foreign applicants to maintain programs, the disadvantages of the three year program, and the absolute necessity for dental school administrators to recognize the need for advanced programs to have proper resources.
- **April 1998** the need to recognize *market growth competition* (differing and value added treatment) as our strength. Efforts to strengthen prosthodontics by meeting and working with the general dentist, *collaborative competition*, has been tried and failed. Seeing this, it is imperative that The American College of Prosthodontists receive our every attention and effort, including a yearly convocation of the College, which would publicly recognize all special achievements connected with Fellowship and the College.
- **July 1998** that there is a need for The American College of Prosthodontists to develop a corporate theme carrying a message unique to the specialist.
- **October 1998** that 21 specialty issues and problems needing attention were identified. And that to this date, 44 solutions and recommendations await implementation!
- **January 1999** that even though the need to challenge The American Board of Prosthodontics had been highlighted time and time again in the *ProsStars Newsletter*, the need was once again addressed by letter to all certificate holders. Drs. Valauri, Jackson, Ferencz, and Jacob added their personal testimonials that board certification holds great value for the individual, the specialty and the consumer patient we all hold so dear.

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But enough already!! **What will bring you to action?** Is there anything worth saying or worth trying that remains to be said or tried? Think about these things you can do:

- ✓ Ask your organization why its Foundation doesn't publish a financial statement? Ask if you can see a detailed accounting statement. Ask them why they think a scholarship or two or a funding of a research project or two is enough, especially when weighed against other uses of the Foundation's donations for meeting, social and travel uses. Ask them, if possibly, they are just piling money as a hedge against future meeting expenses and organization niceties?
- ✓ Go to your Dean and ask: How can you justify the high tuition level of the advanced training program in prosthodontics? How do you arrive at the yearly tuition level, and can it be specifically broken down? Could it be less? Is the school making money or losing money on the program? Is the accounting available? What could be done to decrease the tuition level and how could that be used to the advantage of the school?
- ✓ Ask your Dean what good is maintaining a training program with foreign capital? Ask what good foreign trainees do the school, the specialty and the patients in the community in which the school lies when the foreign trainee returns home?

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✓ What would happen if the dental schools became responsible for filling their own advanced training programs— in every specialty— from within? What if they had to fill the number of openings, as decided by the school, with students from their own school? What would happen if a training committee within the school looked at all applicants from their school, and decided who would train in what? What would happen within the dental student population if they knew this assessment was going on; if they knew that a certain limited number of advanced training positions were available upon graduation; and/or if they knew that their interest, performance, and achievement would be the determining factors of their selection to advanced training; but most important, that they knew there was opportunity, availability and financial assistance for advanced training right within their own school? They would know that the only competition for the available training slots would come from their fellow students. There would be no move, no application process to many institutions, no “personality-plus” interviews or apprehensions about how to fund and travel to them, and no hang time waiting for acceptance responses. This would be the end of the “Match” process. This would end the foreign resident fill of advanced training slots. This would mean the dental schools would be responsible for what they created. They wouldn’t be able to just sit back and let the process work itself, only to later take the money for whatever use they wished. The dental school would have to decide how many slots, what would be the tuition, how would the program support itself, and what efforts would be necessary to maintain the quality of training. All advanced training would become important to the school because the responsibility from start to finish would lie with the school. As frosting on the cake, the school would be responsible for preparing and ushering the certificate holder to the Boards, the pass rate being used as a measure of success. — My, my, how refreshing!!

✓ Ask your prosthodontic organization if it has ever lobbied—lobbied any group for anything? Has it ever gone to dental schools and said, “Your tuition for the advanced training program in prosthodontics is too high; it has now become prohibitive for your dental students to consider as a specialty training program!” Has your organization asked, “Have you ever considered that the specialty of prosthodontics is important in dentistry because of the aging population, birth defect anomalies seen in patients, severe defects seen because of traumas, and especially the complicated treatments required because of past dental intrusions that attempted to override dental disease, but failed?” Has your organization asked why the dental school remains totally silent in talking about the great advantages of having trained specialists available to treat problems the general dentist can’t? Has your organization asked the dental school why it maintains an advanced training program, but doesn’t publicize it; or make every attempt to enroll its own the dental students in it; or show it as a distinct advantage to the community?

✓ No, better yet, in relation to your organization and its worth to the specialty, why is it not more political? Why are it’s main events social events surrounded by darkened rooms filled with slide lectures? To American College of Prosthodontists’ credit it has private practice seminars, mentors - educators seminars, an active House of Delegates addressing contemporary issues, and an exhibitors area that brings the latest the manufacturers have to offer to the meeting. All the more reason to join, support and become active in The American College of Prosthodontists.

✓ Is your organization your pathway to involvement? Or do you just join and say “nice to see ya” as you attend the meeting getting ready for a comfortable sleep in the lectures? Does your involvement mean getting your picture in the journal, or does it mean work, conflicts, expenses, criticisms, compromises in position, exposure in knowledge, and time, time and more time? 44 recommendations await discussion and implementation. 44 recommendations await your action! Your action! Now! Are you concerned or just passively letting the other member do it?

✓ And finally, do we make progress by a continual worry about our name? By example look at the thousands of company names and the thousand and thousands of mutual fund names in the market section of the Wall Street Journal. And now think of the hundreds of thousands of “dot coms” coming into existence. And we think a minor name change will bring us to the attention of the public? Who are we kidding? Kittens born in the oven are not biscuits; and practitioners calling themselves the International Makers of Prosthodontic Lifesaving Appliances Needed To Survive [IMPLANTS] are not specialists in prosthodontics! ☐

Let’s get busy doing what needs to be done, or we’ll just dry up as a specialty in this century!