

Achievement, Meetings, and Award Ceremonies

A Call to Action! Let's Have A Value Added Meeting

A trained prosthodontist's greatest achievement is a successful treatment accomplished in the patient with special problems. Rest assured that no one else in dentistry will have the training or has the wide scope of experience to achieve equal results.

Training completed in an accredited advanced education program in prosthodontics and added experience imparts the skills and extra knowledge necessary to treat special dental needs.

A successful challenge of the American Board of Prosthodontics becomes an added proof of achievement.

Achievement

No doubt about it, the highest and most gratifying reward in prosthodontics, maybe in dentistry, is becoming an American Board of Prosthodontics Diplomate. Diplomate status is the formal recognition of ability, skill and knowledge achieved through seven years of didactic and clinical effort beyond the baccalaureate; followed by an intensive review and patient preparation process required for board examination; and finally the successful completion of one of the most lengthy and rigorous examinations undertaken in any branch of dentistry or medicine. A recognition of Diplomate status comes in print, noted in the Journal of Prosthetic Dentistry and in the American College of Prosthodontists' newsletter. Later, because membership status in the American College of Prosthodontists so dictates, added recognition comes with elevation to Fellow in the College. By tradition the College carries out this advancement at an annual luncheon event held during its yearly meeting.

ProsStars pointed out in January, 1999 that boarded prosthodontists would be the first to say that this rigorous process isn't an exercise to prove themselves better than others in the dental profession. Rather the process proves that the time and money spent (and it has already been spent) has been worth the effort. It becomes a verification of what they suspected, and that is they are as good as the best in the specialty. They have proven to themselves that they have risen to a plane that puts them equal with equals; an achievement believed! ■

Meetings

"Nice to see Ya!" I've made my schedule and travel plan. I've arrived at the hotel. The get acquainted cocktail party was noisy and full of greetings and party smiles. The important felt more important. And now I'm ready for the first day, all suited up and eager to sit in a darkened room for research reports and success stories told by practitioners eager to show off their skills. I've done this many times and in many places. The organizations I belong to are all doing the same thing. I head for the annual luncheon followed by the annual business meeting. No, I think I'll skip the business meeting and get some fresh air before I hit the darkened room again. Finally, the bus trip and the river cruise! You've ridden on one bus and seen one river and you've seen them all. But oh what fun! There is the socializing and the making and renewing of friendships, fleeting as they are. More dark room. Finally I dress in my best and head for the president's dinner. I knew the head table but nice to hear them introduced and to see them dressed in their finery. The meal was splendid although overly costly for something I really didn't want to eat. And the band! Ear shattering and so intrusive in that conversation I was trying to have across that eight foot round table. Oh well, there's always next year. Finally back on the airplane winging it home. Did I learn anything? Did I make some lasting friends? Did I see the organization progressing from last year? Do I know now that John Q. Public thinks better of me because of my attendance at the meeting?

Continued over

Well, I know I'll try it again in the next couple of months because the next meeting I head for (a different organization) will be just the same. What a relief! The same repetitive meeting routine and the same effort put toward it with the same results. "Ho, Hum, I think I might just have a nap!"

Sound familiar? The fictional dental meeting serves as an example of many actual meetings taking place within prosthodontics and certainly, other dental organizations as well.

In prosthodontics there are many organizations with many meetings to choose from. Some are:

Interest Related meetings:

Fixed Prosthodontics, Equilibration, Gnathological, Esthetics, Implants

and some are related to

Specific Geographic Areas:

Pacific Coast, Greater New York, Southeastern, Northeastern, Florida, and numerous other out-of-U. S. areas.

Even though they have different names, their purposes have blended similarities. The purposes are seen as:

• **Educational.** But are they? Is there an evidence based study that proves one way or the other that going to a meeting alters or enhances clinical behavior, changes office procedure, or institutes the use of new materials? If the answer is positively yes, to what degree and how often are the behaviors modified?

• **Social.** There is no disputing the social involvement that comes with a meeting. Maybe the social contact is the greatest benefit of all. After all, isolated practices, not in hospitals or in military or school or government related units create a need to contact others in a same isolated status in order to have opportunity for comparisons: comparisons of practice, technique, office management, and life style.

• **Philanthropic.** Have any dental organizations developed criteria stating what exact needs of the public can be

met by their organization; and have they ever statistically measured the effect of their organization's gifting activities on addressing the determined need? Yes, there are scholarships and community service activities.

Publicizing such activities is always a plus in calling for funds for an established foundation. On the other hand, a hard look at an organization's activities, assessing where it actually spends in time and money, might emphasize that the organization is really organized to plan and conduct and finance their meeting— period.

• **Public Acknowledgment.** Does the public, the patient, and the community in general really care whether or not their prosthodontist goes to a meeting or is a member of a prestigious prosthodontic organization? Do referring general dentists, now called "family" dentists, really know or care about their attending prosthodontist's organizational memberships? A membership or multiple memberships might truly have a common purpose— a personal reward to the joiner. But let's be honest, the public's awareness of who belongs to what probably is of minor importance in weighing the value of their prosthodontist.

A last observation might be that dental meetings in general have fallen into a rut. One must remember that organizations are made up of individuals, and the organization itself cannot be blamed for any of its activities or lack of activities. Some of those individuals, the small core of members who unselfishly give of themselves to work and chair and take official positions in an organization, continue to do remarkably well considering the credit given them. The observed organizational malaise has to lie with the majority of members not getting out, participating, speaking, writing, promoting, and discussing initiatives that might lead to better meetings. We should know that meetings won't go away; meetings just have to get better with more members providing change and interesting innovation. ■

Dental meetings should:

- provide education
- and create social contact.

Dental organizations should:

- have meetings;
- benefit the public at large;
- acknowledge self worth.

Dental meetings have become routinely similar one to another.

Organizational malaise cannot be attributed to a small core of hard workers, but rather to the many members who don't actively participate.

Meetings are here to stay; but they have to get better with change and interesting innovations.

Award Ceremonies

Remember the Olympics and the medals and the awards ceremonies? What fun! The importance of awards ceremonies really came to light when the doubles skaters from Canada were finally awarded Gold Medals. Jan Ullmark, the coach of the miss-scored Canadian skaters, Sale and Peiletier, immediately stated that the medals should be given in "a total ceremony, even if it's just for you two, and it should be at the [awards] plaza. They can't just give it to you. There should be a proper ceremony and a proper medal presentation."

As it turned out this was exactly what happened, and we all watched it, truly happy to see both the Russians and the Canadians on the awards platform!

This proved that a public event is a must in award granting. Such "rights of passage" announce that there has been an achievement, usually above and beyond that normally expected; and the achievement is deserving of an award.

Educational institutions are the best at this. We all have been through graduation ceremonies, and we like being in them and love seeing our families recognized in public as having received their degrees.

The military is also good at this! Usually the military award is given in a ceremony in front of a formation of the unit's personnel and at times, an invited audience. A citation is read; a medal is pinned on the uniform; a congratulatory handshake is given and a salute returned and the audience, if present, renders great applause. The awardee and family members are filled with pride; the unit receives public recognition; and the awarding authority is satisfied that the individual has been given proper commendation in a public way.

And finally, awards ceremonies create great opportunities to honor invitees; those people who have benefited the group in special ways from without. ■

"They can't just give it to you. There should be a proper ceremony."

*Olympic Canadian skating coach
Jan Ullmark*

The recognition of achievement should be ceremonious and a public event.

Colleges and universities have historically emphasized "rights of passage."

Medals and ribbons and flags and bands mark military achievement and heroism, but it's the unit, the command and a public involvement that makes the event remarkable.

When we think of proper recognitions five important elements come to light, and they are:

Planned Awards Ceremonies

Favorably Result In:

1. Increasing individual worth by presenting an award deserving of public recognition.
2. A visible positive public involvement, which is seen by family members and close friends.
3. A heightened level of pride spilling over to all members of the group or unit. Pride is contagious! The remarked upon level of accomplishment by one increases the desire for all to strive to an equal level.
4. An awarding authority satisfied that their members are meeting the unit's goals; and, best of all, the goals become public information.
5. An opportunity to publicly acknowledge and reward others who have given, donated, or served beyond that normally expected, but who are most likely not members of the host group.

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The American College of Prosthodontists

Without a doubt the American College of Prosthodontists is serving the public and the specialty well! It is accepted as the "spokes-organization" for the specialty. Its officers are asked to provide the specialty's input in many if not all studies constantly being developed in and about dentistry. Taking nothing away from the many prestigious organizations having interests in the various phases of prosthodontics and having interests related to differing geographic areas, the College is the premier organization of the group and the only one solely related to the specialty.

If you haven't read "The American College of Prosthodontists: The Early Years" appearing in the Summer 2001 *College Messenger*, do it! Follow that by reading past president Bob Sproull's "The American College of Prosthodontists: The First Year" in the Winter 2001 *Messenger*. A review of both is in order.

Historically, a key point in the College's development and organization was naming it. Keith Marcroft, one of the founders and ACP's second president searched for a name meaning the same as "association" or "academy", but one that wouldn't become confused with existing academies and societies. Dr. Marcroft, by letter dated May 15, 1970, suggested the name "college", and according to Dr. Sproull's history, the founders endorsed the name The American College of Prosthodontists unanimously.

The name "college" is key, because it carries with it academic overtones. The American College of Prosthodontists, as it was organized and developed is very worthy of any implications relating it to academia. There are many definitions for "college", and one sees in them the words: "a body supported by a foundation; used for educational purposes; offering instruction, but not granting degrees; and offering instruction usually in a professional or technical field."*

*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary

and

Colleges have convocations.

The ACP is the specialty of prosthodontics and is a premier organization.,

Recent ACP Messengers carry excellent histories.

A luncheon venue is no longer the best setting for ACP awards ceremonies.

"College" is an appropriate name for the specialty organization.

The time has come for a Value Added meeting!

A Value Added Meeting

Most commonly at some time within their activities colleges hold "convocations." A convocation is a ceremonial assembly of members of a college. Any ACP members who are in faculty positions and all who have passed through institutions of higher learning most certainly have been a part of or witnessed convocations.

Convocations are special ceremonies that invite the public to recognize achievement. These ceremonies involve a change in status in some of the members; they provide an opportunity to hear accolades heaped upon the organization by outside speakers; and they are used to bring distinguished people in the field into the organization for honorary memberships and special recognitions.

With all due respect, luncheons and even banquets do not and can not fill the bill for awards ceremonies. Luncheons usually are:

- business related
- for members only, not the public
- not formal ceremonies
- sandwiched between events
- rushed, noisy, and distracting because of social conversation
- optional, based on ticket purchase

A new, more fitting venue is needed for a public recognition of the highest and most gratifying rewards and awards in prosthodontics. The goals of reaching Diplomate status in the American Board of Prosthodontics, and an elevation to Fellow status in the American College of Prosthodontists are achievements that should be seen in a special public setting, with added great celebration.

The setting: an American College of Prosthodontist's Convocation, which should include appropriate regalia and ceremonial events honoring its Fellows and new Diplomates in the manner they deserve. Additionally the Convocation will be used to recognize award winners and new and honorary members. This is the event needed to top off an already great college meeting! ■

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Is a value added meeting needed? Yes!
Is an ACP “Convocation” the answer? Yes!
Do we know how to get there? Yes!

name: Let's don't get hung up over the name. Best to call it a convocation; or a ceremonial event, a celebratory advancement, a public recognition ceremony, or a conferring of Fellowships.

startup: No one person, no newsletter, no overlooked or neglected new member can instigate a convocation. The event has to be visualized and wanted. A past involvement in a similar event will help picture what an ACP convocation should be. Officers, executive staff, past presidents and past officers, committee members and delegates to the house will have to become informed and finally see the need. Long range planning is necessary. The development of the convocation format is easily done, programming it into an annual session might take a while. It will be worth it!

example:

Dr. Steve Ralls, the Executive Director of the American College of Dentists lists for ProsStars the following advantages of a Convocation Ceremony

Academic gowns with the organization's colors reinforce the dignity of the occasion, and this has the potential to increase the visibility of the organization in other academic ceremonies and graduations

[note: the ACP has its own academic gown, and mortar board cover]

Ceremonial aspects emphasize the special nature of the event and clearly makes the day more memorable.

A classy ceremony tends to have participants associate the organization with class; and provides the fitting conclusion and recognition that adequately befits the years of work and sacrifice required for various categories of membership in the organization. To the contrary, no ceremony or just simple introductions over lunch becomes a “cheap” conclusion to a hard-earned prize.

Since participation is required, rather than optional, attendance is increased, meeting arrangements are more predictable, and new members develop stronger ties to the organization, and possibly improve their attendance at future organization meetings.

An address to the convocation audience by a high profile speaker further emphasizes the special nature of the day.

A ceremony provides a perfect lead-in to a banquet or reception to cap the day's activities.

A memorable tradition is established.

Additionally ProsStars lists more advantages:

The opportunity is created to invite selected undergraduate dental students, thereby broadening their knowledge of the specialty.

Creates an awareness of dentistry's importance at the administrative level in the nation's universities. [Dr. Michael Alfano, NYU College of Dentistry's Dean, discusses this in detail in his “Dental Education: One Dean's Perspective” , Journal of the American College of Dentists, Volume 68, Number 3]

Dr. Ralls cites the following disadvantages:

Careful planning is necessary for a smoothly running event.

Finding the right keynote speaker requires extra attention.

Event planning requires advance commitment; no signing up at the door.

There is a financial impact:

- all participants need to rent gowns and hoods
- the keynote speaker needs to be funded
- ceremonial regalia needs to be obtained and maintained
- additional staffing probably becomes necessary to coordinate the ceremony itself

There is resistance to change, in that existing members did not have the benefit of a convocation when they were elevated to various membership categories.

action required: *Proposed Resolution for the 2002 ACP House of Delegates meeting:*

Resolved: That an annual Convocation of the membership be established and included as a separate formal event in the annual session of the American College of Prosthodontists, and further that the Board of Directors be directed and empowered to plan, finance, and schedule said convocation at the earliest possible time.

[Suggested for use by any and all ACP Sections]

remember: no risk; no reward!

Let's Just Do It!!