



Evidence-Based "Firsts"

The new Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Prosthodontics*, Dr. David Felton, wrote and published his first editorial in the journal's March 2004 issue. It was entitled "A Time of Firsts." He stated that after several months of careful reflection, he was struck by the many "firsts" both the *Journal of Prosthodontics* and the American College of Prosthodontists have enjoyed over the past few years.

We know now that a "careful reflection" is not the same as an evidence-based search of the actual history and happenings of either the journal or the ACP. Why Dr. Felton, a well-respected educator, chose to start his tenure as the journal's Editor-in-Chief with an op-ed piece full of error and heavy with lack of past fact, begs an answer.

1. Dr. Felton began by giving great credit to the journal's new publisher, Blackwell Publishing. We were told that we have an enormous improvement over our previous contract; a demonstrated incredible innovation in their publishing and worldwide marketing capabilities; and, finally, an instantaneous dedication to our specialty organization. Dr. Felton could not have possibly reflected on:
 - The long discussions that took place in the College's Executive Council—those discussions concluding that we should begin publication of our own journal;
 - The give and take discussion with and offerings made by the Editorial Board of the Journal of Prosthetic Dentistry in their attempts to divert the College from beginning its own publication;
 - The many trips and visits to many publishing firms to work out publishing requirements and contract arrangements for a new journal;
 - And, finally, the great care and attention given in the selection process of our first publisher, our first editor, and, along with that, the innovative creation of a journal business editor.

With such slights Dr. Felton, debased the W.B. Saunders Company and the long road traveled by those who guided our college to them. Would not it be best to wait and see—perhaps for five or ten years—how all of the new initiatives in editing and publishing bring about a measure of dedication to our specialty?



2. Next, Dr. Felton observed that due to “a highly successful” House of Delegates decision in October 2002, “the first significant public relations initiative for the members in the history of our organization” was begun. Be careful, because the use of unmeasurable modifiers such as highly successful and first significant might be rightfully seen in organization newsletters, but they are rarely found in the scientific literature. Did Dr. Felton know that:
 - In 1983, the ACP’s Pennsylvania Section published a patient education brochure that laid foundations for the College’s public relations initiative?
 - Before the 1984 annual meeting, a three-pronged public relations program was put into action by Fellow Tom Balshi and his Public and Professional Relations Committee?
 - As reported in the College’s newsletter in 1988, the above committee was hard at work with two new brochures—one directed to patient communications and the other “Creating Smiles for Living”—and that five corporate sponsors each donated \$5,000 to make these public relations vehicles possible?
 - In the mid-1990s, the Proctor and Gamble Company, in conjunction with the ACP, launched a series of education brochures entitled “Perspectives in Prosthodontics”—and that their indicated use was for the public and dentistry at large?
 - In 1998, the College published a new “Creating Generations of Smiles” brochure, followed by a comprehensive ACP Marketing Manual? Did he know the same year brought about the ACP’s Web site?
 - In 1999, the College began one day seminars nationwide entitled “Lights, Action, Learning?”

Because of his activities in the College, Dr. Felton should well understand the effects that past symposia, joint meetings and thrusts of the Education Foundation have had on the College’s public relations. To call our most recent involvements in public relations “a first” does a terrible disservice to those members who have laid many important foundations for present ongoing public relations actions.

3. To say that for the first time we have developed “an achievable” Strategic Action Plan for the ACP” is to wonder if Dr. Felton’s use of the modifier achievable changes ACP history? Did our Editor-in-Chief reflect upon and review the facts when:
 - Our first president, Keith Marcroft (Newsletter, Vol. 2, No.1, April 1974) suggested that an Aims and Goals committee be formed? The first Aims and Goals workshop was held in July 1975 resulting in the publication of seven goals with 44 subsets.



- President Cosmo DeSteno appointed an *ad hoc* committee in 1987 to study the future of the ACP, in effect planning our future?
- President William Kuebker (Newsletter, Vol. 18, No. 1, Feb. 1988) said that “the College faces many short and long term challenges, so it is appropriate that we have a Goals and Objective meeting? This meeting was held in San Antonio, Texas in June 1988.
- A third Aims and Goals workshop was held in Dallas, Texas during the summer of 1993, the result being a short list of six broad goals and five or six objectives under each? President Ronald Woody stated that “this work truly addressed our direction for the next five years.” He added that “the best way to create the future is to plan it.”

Dr. Felton may defend himself by saying Aims and Goals Workshops are not the same as strategic action plans—but call them what you want, they really are the same. Were they achievable—something that could be measured? President Jack Preston wanted to be sure they were and he assigned various set objectives to individuals and committees to ensure that the stated goals were reached. Additionally President Preston demanded that the College Newsletter publish a list of the persons and committees responsible for each goal. As long ago as 1983 Dr. Preston knew what achievable meant.

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With all of that in mind, it would be interesting to see the charge given the new Editor-in-Chief by the Board of Directors—if there was one. Did it include using the journal as a forum for op-eds? Did it include naming the Editor-in-Chief as the spokesman for the College? Was he told to issue news reports of College happenings via journal editorials?

If none of the above, what’s an editor to do? Edit—of course; cleaning up the scientific content submitted, and in doing so, publishing the best of the best. The journal should be the journal, scientifically based! Conversely, the ACP’s *Messenger* has become the premier organizational newsletter. In it any member or officer can voice opinion, cite history, report College news, or even self-congratulate as the occasion arises. And with great emphasis, the newsletter should be a newsletter, news and happenings based; the voice—the ACP’s ONLY voice—pure and simple.

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