



Dr. Darryl Smith

“Your success in dentistry did not happen by accident. Are you doing your part?”

Essentials of Practice

A week into the position as president of CDA and I found myself in Toronto, strolling down the aisles of the trade show at the Ontario Dental Association Annual Spring Meeting. Everything needed for a modern dental office was available. The continuing education program provided information on the latest in treatment options and management of a dental practice. Surrounded by so many supplies and services, I was struck by the question, what does a modern dental office require? As I went to lunch with one of the many volunteers who put on such a great meeting, I thought deeply about this question. I arrived at the answer that knowledge and human resources are the absolute essentials of a dental office — the rest are only tools.

There are 2 components to knowledge: transfer and creation. Knowledge transfer occurs at our universities and continues throughout our career. But before there can be knowledge transfer, there must be knowledge creation. Knowledge creation takes place within our universities and the broader research community. Our universities are the key to knowledge, but they find themselves under great pressures that range from a lack of qualified educators to insufficient funds for research and operation.

We have a professional and community responsibility to support research endeavours in dentistry. We can lend a hand by participating in university fundraising programs and through charitable giving. Charitable giving is part of the reality of funding programs today, as governments and industry no longer give unless they see others stepping up to the plate.

In particular, there are 2 important areas that deserve your support: your university alumni association and your charity, the Dentistry Canada Fund. The objectives of both these institutions work in tandem. According

to the Dentistry Canada Fund's website, their "Oral Health – Good for Life"™ campaign "will produce outcomes and strategic investments that benefit everyone involved in the chain of oral health care delivery in Canada." The act of giving extends to you and your practice because the next breakthrough in clinical research, the individual who purchases your practice and the teacher who trains your daughter or son will all be the results of how successfully the profession, in partnership with our universities, is able to keep abreast of the needs of Canadians.

Human resources are the other dentistry essential. I could fill pages on this topic but want to focus on volunteers. Dentistry has its share of volunteers, from those providing care to the underprivileged, to those working on your behalf at the society, association and college levels. We are able to provide optimal care to our patients because volunteers take time out of their busy schedules to work tirelessly on our behalf, finding seamless solutions to a myriad of issues that might otherwise be disruptive to our everyday practice.

We have a responsibility to give to our universities and charities and to belong to our local, provincial and national associations. By supporting them, we are supporting those working on our behalf to create a better future for Canadians. It takes cooperation between all of our dentistry organizations and associations working from different perspectives on the issues affecting our profession and the health of Canadians to develop policy and direction that serve everyone well. I must praise our neighbours to the South who saw in their wisdom that to be part of the dental profession, you must belong to your local, state and national associations. Is this too much of a dream to ask of Canadian dentists?

As the sales rang up on the trade show floor, I was mindful of the ever-present question of the cost and value of giving and belonging. Perhaps organized dentistry has done too well at creating seemingly calm seas in a time that has actually been filled with storm. The next time you find yourself on a trade show floor, in a lecture hall, or sitting on a deck with a gentle summer breeze in your face enjoying what Canada has to offer, remember that your success in dentistry did not happen by accident. Are you doing your part?

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