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The Spirit of Our Profession

In this issue, I salute the 100 colleagues who reviewed manuscripts for *JCDA* in 2008. Some reviewed just one paper, while others evaluated considerably more. Whatever the number, they all gladly gave of their time and expertise without receiving any direct compensation for their efforts. Knowing that these reviewers are busy people, I always approach them gingerly when I ask them to volunteer their time. Yet I am always amazed by the selfless generosity they display. Let me give you one example of the outstanding professionalism of our reviewers.

At the end of last year, one of our regular reviewers sent me his usual comprehensive comments and constructive suggestions about a manuscript. He also included an apology, saying that his judgment might not be up to its usual standard as one of his parents had passed away the previous week. He added that because he had committed to reviewing the paper by a certain date, he felt honour-bound to meet the deadline. I cannot tell you how touched I was by this revelation and how privileged I feel to work with such dedicated colleagues.

The contribution of this reviewer toward the advancement of our profession captures the spirit of *JCDA* perfectly for me. As *JCDA* enters its 75th year, I am reminded that this spirit has a long and distinguished history. I recently went back and read the English and French editorials from *JCDA*'s first issue, published in 1935. They spoke of the publication as a project that was years in the making, but which was seen as crucial to the development of a proud knowledge-based profession that could stand shoulder to shoulder with our international confreres and other senior professions in Canada. Pledging to fight for the “highest and noblest principles, thus representing the best traditions of Canadian dentistry,” the sentiment evoked in these initial columns is as true today as it was then.

The current *JCDA* is also devoted to advancing Canadian dentistry as a knowledge-based profession and projecting the image of dentists as a group of ethical people dedicated to improving the oral health of all Canadians. The discourse in today's *JCDA* is clearly different from that found in some of the commercial publications that land on your desk in increasing numbers. The loudest messages in these publications often relate to increasing your profitability and efficiency as a businessperson.

While dental practice is inevitably a commercial enterprise, the discourse of business can never be allowed to dominate our publications. If business becomes its primary focus, dentistry can expect to be regulated in the same manner as other modern industries. Our justifiable claim to a special status in society rests on other attributes, namely science and ethics, which must, in my view, always be reflected in the pages of *JCDA*.

A spirit of committed volunteerism has carried *JCDA* through to its 75th birthday and this same spirit will be required if we are to reach a century of service to the profession. *JCDA* operates in an environment that is rapidly changing, at a variety of levels: the composition of the profession is different, dental associations are evolving, sources of information are plentiful and increasingly varied, information consumption patterns are shifting. Combined with rising production costs, these factors all make the publication of a scientific journal quite a challenge.

Together, I am certain that we can find opportunity in these challenges. In the coming year, I would like to expand the “community of active engagement” of *JCDA* by attracting new readers, authors, reviewers and advertisers. There is so much energy and goodwill in our sector that can be harnessed for the good of *JCDA* and our profession.

You can contribute immeasurably to our national dental journal and our profession by volunteering your ideas on the look and content of our publication. You can enter the spirit of the profession through *JCDA*, our one true national meeting place dedicated to the benefit of all dentists in Canada. I look forward to continuing an active dialogue with you.

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