

A Century of Service

Dental Literature (Part Six of a Series)

Dr. Donald Gullett (1898–1973), secretary of the Canadian Dental Association from 1943 to 1965 and author of *A History of Dentistry in Canada*, once said, “Measurement of the stature of a profession can best be measured by three fundamentals: education, association and journalism.” By the time the Canadian Dental Association was founded in 1902 these fundamentals were already launched and to various degrees were making their mark and influence known across Canada.



Dr. Donald Gullett

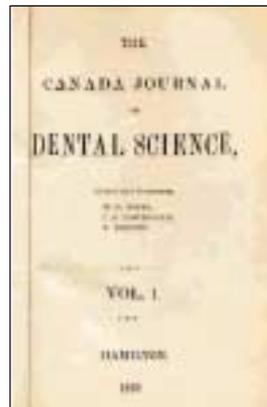
Dr. W.H. Elliott of Montreal was the first dentist practicing in Canada to contribute to the dental literature. Between 1842 and 1851 Elliott published 18 papers. One of the earliest journals founded in the United States was the *American Journal of Dental Science* in 1839, and it is known that Canadian dentists Drs. Elliott, Charles Brewster and George Beers from Montreal and Lawrence Van Buskirk of Halifax had articles in its pages.

In the 1850s there were two short-lived attempts to establish dental journalism in Canada. A few issues of a publication titled *The Family Dentist* were edited by S.S. Blodgett of Brockville, Ontario, and the *Journal of the Times* appeared irregularly in Halifax between 1858 and 1860. The Halifax publication was a four-pager with dental material on the first page and “newsy” social bits on the other three.

Canada’s First Dental Journal: 1868

The first dental journal to be published in Canada was the *Canada Journal of Dental Science*, published by

Dr. W. George Beers in Montreal, with the first issue appearing in June 1868. Dr. Beers was financing the journal from his own resources and subscribers were few in number. He soon moved the publication to Hamilton, Ontario, where Dr. Curtis Chittenden became assistant editor. Dr. Chittenden was one of the dentists who, with Dr. Barnabus Day, founded the Ontario Dental Association.



Canada’s first dental journal
Canada Journal of Dental Science
Vol. 1, 1869

Editors and Proprietors:
W.G. BEERS
C.S. CHITTENDEN
R. TROTTIER

The *Canada Journal of Dental Science* seemed to be in difficulty from the beginning. Dr. Beers stayed in Hamilton for only a short time before he moved the journal back to Montreal. There his financial struggle continued. The *Canada Journal* appeared monthly until 1871 then floundered. Only a few more sporadic issues were printed before it finally disappeared in 1879.

But Dr. Beers was always a persistent individual and in January 1889 he launched the *Dominion Dental Journal*, which remained the premier dental journal in Canada for more than 46 years. In 1935 it ceased publication when it was absorbed by the newly created *Journal of the Canadian Dental Association*.



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Dr. William George Beers: 1841–1900

Beginning in the 1860s and until the end of the century, the name of W. George Beers of Montreal was one of the most well known in the entire dental profession in Canada. At the time of his death in 1900 a Montreal newspaper summarized the expanse of his life in a phrase: “a well-known dentist, a fearless patriot, a famous athlete, an efficient militia officer, and a much respected citizen.”

Dr. W. George Beers (left) was born in Montreal and received his dental training through the indentureship system. He practiced all his life in Montreal, but there was scarcely an arena of dentistry in which he did not become involved. When the Dental Association of the Province of Quebec was formed in 1868 he was its secretary. When the first dental school, the Dental College of the Province of Quebec, opened in 1892, he was the first dean. An excellent orator and patriot he spoke out loudly and clearly at a time when the situation between Canada and the United States was tense. His “Canada is not for sale” speech was quoted throughout the nation and played a role in the 1911 federal election.



An ardent sportsman, Beers was introduced to the game of lacrosse at the age of six and championed the game all his life. The rules of lacrosse that he published in 1860 standardized the game as it is played today.

At a time when dentistry was struggling to establish its “professionalism” George Beers set the tone for the well-qualified dentist:

If we consider dentistry a mere trade, then let us agree to work for a little over cost as the shoemaker who makes our shoes; but if a profession, let us charge for our brains.

The *Dominion Dental Journal* was in continuous print for 46 years — from 1889 to 1935 — and remarkably, there were only two editors in all that time. When George Beers died in 1900 another “giant” of Canadian dentistry, Dr. Albert E. Webster, assumed editorship of the *DDJ*.

Dr. Albert E. Webster (right) graduated from the Chicago College of Dental Surgery in 1893 and the Royal College of Dental Surgeons in 1894 and then earned a medical degree from the Rush Medical College in Chicago in 1897. A brilliant academic, he taught at the Royal College of Dental Surgeons in



Toronto throughout his entire professional life and served as dean from 1915 to 1923.

Canadian dentistry was indeed fortunate to have a person of Dr. Webster’s calibre as editor of the *DDJ* for 35 years. At a time when dentistry and dental education laboured under rapidly changing conditions, Dr. Webster, through his penetrating editorials and his selection of profound journal articles and in his capacity as dean, influenced and elevated the course of the profession.

As CDA president in 1910, Dr. Webster devoted almost all of his presidential address to scientific programs of the future, with emphasis on sterilization, the relationship of dental disease to general health, and the place of dentistry in health services.

During World War I hundreds of sergeants had trained as dental assistants, which renewed discussion of the use and training of dental auxiliaries. Dean Webster, ever forward-thinking, was instrumental in establishing, in 1919, a one-year course for dental assistants at the Royal College of Dental Surgeons.

Do We Need Another Journal?

A proposal for the Canadian Dental Association to get into the publishing business and mount its own dental journal had been discussed since the early 1920s. Some Association members were convinced that because a national voice was now speaking for all dentists, it was only fitting that there also be a regular written medium that would further bind the profession into a cohesive whole. A precedent had been set in 1917 when the American Dental Association established the monthly *Journal of the American Dental Association*, which soon came to the forefront of dental periodical literature in the United States. On the other side of the debate were those who asked, “Do we need another journal?”

At the time — in the 1920s — there were, besides the *Dominion Dental Journal*, three other dental publications in Canada.

Oral Health

Oral Health was first published in 1911 by Dr. Wallace Seccombe, an extraordinary individual who was a force in dentistry almost from the day of his graduation in 1909 from the Royal College of Dental Surgeons. Possessing a profound business sense, **Dr. Seccombe** (right) conceived the



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idea of publishing a new dental journal, supported by advertising, and mailed free to every dentist in Canada each month. This marketing plan was in direct contrast to that of the *Dominion Dental Journal*. Although highly respected, the latter depended on individual subscriptions for support.

Wallace Seccombe died in 1936, but *Oral Health* continued to be published by Seccombe House in Toronto until it was purchased by the Southam newspaper chain in 1973. *Oral Health* still retains Seccombe's policy of being distributed free to every dentist in Canada. Dr. James Kerr, the present editor-chairman, has been with the publication since 1969, and, until her retirement as senior publisher in 1999, Erla Kay gave 25 years of leadership to strengthen the magazine's influence in the industry.

After founding *Oral Health* in 1911 Wallace Seccombe was appointed superintendent to the Royal College of Dental Surgeons. In 1923 he succeeded Dr. Albert E. Webster as dean. In 1916 he inaugurated the first chair of preventive dentistry in the world and was well suited for making the decision to elevate the school to faculty status in 1925. And it was mainly through Seccombe's efforts that graduate degrees in dentistry were established at the University of Toronto.

Quebec Publications

The first dental journal in the French language in Canada appeared in Quebec in December 1915 under the editorship of Honoré Thibault. This publication first appeared as *La Société d'odontologie* but the name was changed the following May to *La Revue dentaire canadienne*. It continued publishing monthly until 1935 when it merged with the new *Journal of the Canadian Dental Association*.

In 1963, the Association dentaire du Québec (now the Association des chirurgiens dentistes du Québec), during the presidency of Dr. Claude Vachon and under the able editorship of Dr. Paul Simard (right), began publication of *Le Journal dentaire du Québec (JDQ)*. Dr. Simard, a 1948 Université de Montréal graduate and a public health specialist, was dean of the École de médecine dentaire in Quebec from 1972 to 1979.



Publication responsibility for *JDQ* was transferred to the Ordre des dentistes du Québec in 1975. Since its founding *JDQ* has had only three editors: founding editor Dr. Simard

from 1963 to 1970, Dr. Marcel Hébert from 1970 to 1984 and the current editor, Dr. Denis Forest.

Ontario Publications

Ontario's entry into the field of dental journalism came about mostly through the efforts of Dr. Frederick Conboy, dentist, politician, organizer and idealist. Conboy was president of the Ontario Dental Association (ODA) in 1924 and of the Canadian Dental Association in 1928.

Dr. Conboy (right) was the first dentist in Canada to be appointed dental director in a provincial department of health. Following his presidency of the ODA he was the Association's secretary-treasurer for 15 years, and it was during this time, in 1926, that he decided the Association needed a publication. This gave rise to the *Booster*, which became the *Journal of the Ontario Dental Association* in 1931 and subsequently changed its name to *The Ontario Dentist* in 1970. The inexhaustible Dr. Conboy, over and above his service to his provincial and national dental associations, found time to be a lecturer at the Toronto dental school for 29 years, president of the Canadian Dental Research Foundation and mayor of Toronto in 1940.



Journal of the Canadian Dental Association

When the discussions and debates had run their course at CDA committee and general meetings, the proposal for the national association to have a journal won the day. In January 1935 the *Dominion Dental Journal* and *La Revue dentaire canadienne* ceased publication and the *Journal of the Canadian Dental Association* went to press. Dr. M.H. (Harry) Garvin was appointed editor and Dr. Albert Webster editor emeritus. From the outset, the *Journal* was committed to the principle of bilingualism.

The first editor of the French section was Dr. Philippe Hamel (left) of Quebec City. Dr. Hamel, who had just completed his term as president of the Canadian Dental Association, was a true pioneer of French journalism in Canada. Although he only served as French editor for two years, his perfect French style set the tone for the French section of the *Journal* to the present day.



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Dr. M.H. (Harry) Garvin (right) was committed from the outset that the *Journal* should be published under the auspices of the national association and served as chairman of the publication planning committee. He served as editor for 18 years and ran the *Journal* from a battered desk at the back of his Winnipeg dental office. Dr. Garvin graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1902 and the University of Toronto in 1903. Moving immediately to Winnipeg he practiced for 63 years before retirement. His contributions to organized dentistry were extensive. Over the years he served as president of the Canadian Dental Association, the Manitoba Dental Association, the Winnipeg and the Western Canada Dental Societies and the American Academy of Periodontology.



the editor will sincerely try to have imaginative sympathy and to represent the interests of the dentists of Canada.



***Journal of the
Canadian Dental
Association***

**January 1935
Vol. 1, No. 1**

In his editorial in Vol. 1, No.1, in 1935, Dr. Garvin laid out the challenge and set the tone for the *Journal of the Canadian Dental Association*, aspects that have not changed in over 67 years.

The editor is fearfully aware of the many difficulties in editing a journal. Men are different, and what will suit one will not suit another. Some insist on the practical, while others are interested largely in the various phases of research. Mistakes will be made and by some these will be magnified, but we believe that the large majority will be charitable. Whatever may come,

Communiqué

For many years, the *Journal's* sister publication, *Communiqué*, had been printed ad hoc for “special and fast-breaking” events. In 1993 *Communiqué* was reformat- ted into a stand-alone, 16-page publication appearing six times a year to provide information to enhance the personal lives of CDA members and to inform them of CDA’s policies and programs.

The Canadian Dental Association: 1902-2002 — A Century of Service is a Centenary project of the Canadian Dental Association in collaboration with the Dentistry Canada Fund, the charitable foundation for the dental profession in Canada. The 11-part series is written by Dr. Ralph Crawford, Historian and Past President of CDA, with particular thanks to all those who have contributed so generously to the preservation of our rich dental history.



(All statements of opinion or supposed fact are published on the authority of the author and do not necessarily express the views of the CDA or the DCF.)



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