

# Remembering the Past, An Eye to the Future

**O**perative Dentistry begins volume 35 with this issue. For 34 years, this journal has been providing dentistry with the best evidence available to guide dentists in the pursuit of quality and predictable oral health care. Volumes of information have been brought to us through the oversight of outstanding editors working with willing, critical and fair reviewers. The result has been decades of growth in understanding the materials and techniques necessary for treating dental structures that have been damaged by pathology and trauma. People with names, including Medina, Wolcott, Hamilton, Bales, Anderson and McCoy, have provided the guidance and oversight required for such a daunting task. Most recently, we are indebted to Michael A Cochran for the 10 years of devoted service that he has given as editor. Mike has provided oversight for many changes that are now a part of the journal. His focus on decreasing time to publication and transitioning to an electronic format has kept *Operative Dentistry* a strong contributor to the scientific literature. In his tenure, primarily due to a few diligent support people, the journal has increased the number of pages published and the number of affiliations with organizations known for their pursuit of the highest level of care. Mike has been an excellent mentor and has made huge contributions to this issue as the editorial transition has occurred.

I have spent many years involved with Organizational Strategic Planning. That background has caused me to look at new pursuits in terms of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT). How do I see these terms applied to this journal? The following paragraphs touch on my “SWOT” analysis.

Our biggest strength is the people who serve this work. Although the support staff receive a modest salary, this is not true for any of the editors or reviewers. This reflects the dedication and commitment of many people to the success of this work. In spite of this, there are weaknesses and threats that should be recognized.

Much of the best in dental literature is associated with our academies and professional associations. But, these are changing times for the transfer of scientific information to the dental community. Where once a dentist was largely dependent on a handful of academic journals and the expert opinion provided by influential speakers, now a dentist is likely to have more corporate supported information, both in hard copy and electronically over the web, than was ever available before. This information overload challenges the survival of non-corporate academic publications; in particular, publications associated with professional academies. *Operative Dentistry* stands poised to survive these challenges. Distribution costs are being minimized, a staff that is small in number is being encouraged to operate as efficiently as possible and is looking to continue to improve our electronic submission systems; all important issues. There is one area critical to our survival that is being mightily challenged. With the growth of information outlets, many reviewers have been asked to serve in that capacity for a larger number of publications. And, with more publications, there are more papers to review. Combine that with the push for decreased time to publication, and the growth in workload seems to have no end in sight. I am making every effort to request reviews from our Editorial Board no more than once every other month. Reviews of resubmissions would increase the number of potential reviews any one person would be asked to complete. This number may need to increase if a couple of current trends continue. One trend is an increased number of reviewers declining (or not answering) the electronic invitation to review and the other is the aging (that is, retirement) of multiple experienced reviewers. It will be a great help to all of us if each reviewer would hesitate and be very sure that he or she does not have time before the “Decline” link is clicked. But, even if a request comes when time just isn’t available, a quick response allows for quicker identification of another reviewer. Even more important, who is out there and is not reviewing for

*Operative Dentistry* but should be? Please send his or her curriculum vitae to me so that our pool of reviewers doesn't move below a critical mass. Reviewers are the lifeblood of this work.

I see another major threat, and therefore an opportunity that exists: there does not appear to be a universal understanding of what it will mean to be an operative dentist in the future. What will be the future scope of *Operative Dentistry*? What meaning is intended to be communicated when someone identifies with the field of *Operative Dentistry*? Is *Operative Dentistry* to be limited to technique and the materials required to complete those techniques? Or, have there been fundamental changes within the field of *Operative Dentistry*? For example, with the inclusion of the Central Region CAMBRA meeting during the Academy of *Operative Dentistry's* annual session, there is an increased emphasis on caries risk. And, where is the line drawn for operative material/tissue interaction issues? I find no consensus as I look for this answer in today's environment. These are critical questions related to what is appropriate to publish and

who will review manuscripts in an expanded view of *Operative Dentistry*.

I would like to include opinion papers in future issues, which are devoted to exploring this question: "What will *Operative Dentistry* mean to our profession five to ten years from now?" I invite interested individuals to contribute and will give priority to those submissions.

Please note that the online site for the journal has been upgraded. Instructions for navigating the website are on the homepage and are included as an information page at the end of this issue.

I begin this term as your editor with gratefulness for the excellent support that the staff provides, for the excellent work of our reviewers and for the opportunity to serve in this way. As with any change, bumps in the road will occur. I welcome your constructive feedback and ask for your patience as this transition occurs.

Jeffrey A Platt, Editor