

## Failures in dental practice and practice administration: sharing important lessons

The 1988 annual meeting of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry is history, but I am certain that the more than 600 pediatric dentists who attended the meeting will reflect on this meeting as one which was extremely educational and one in which there had been careful planning. Although there were a few last-minute changes just before the program went to press, the actual planning for the meeting began 2 years ago. In fact, the 1989 scientific program for Orlando is essentially complete and preliminary planning is underway for the 1990 Boston meeting.

A trend that I see developing at our scientific meeting and at some other meetings is that the clinician or lecturer does not hesitate to discuss clinical failures or present negative data. Several examples of our clinicians discussing their successes and failures are recalled. Dr. John N. Groper presented an excellent paper, *Fabrication of a more durable fixed anterior esthetic appliance*. Prior to presenting steps in the fabrication of the new appliance that has proven successful, he showed examples of several earlier appliance designs that proved to be unsuccessful in his clinical practice.

Dr. John S. Walsh presented an excellent model of an animal study designed to determine the effectiveness of an anti-inflammatory drug for the reduction of resorption and ankylosis in replanted teeth. While the drug proved to be too toxic, the study paved the way for continued research with anti-inflammatory drugs and their use in replantation of avulsed teeth.

During Dr. Patrick Turley's second lecture, he presented many cases illustrating the orthodontic

management of impacted and traumatically displaced anterior permanent teeth. He described appliances that had been used in the past with limited success and the ones that were more successful in reducing the amount of ankylosis and resorption following replantation.

I recall a lecture many years ago by Dr. Miles R. Markley, the recognized master clinician in the restoration of teeth with silver amalgam. Dr. Markley's lecture title was, *Failures I have experienced during 25 years of placing silver alloys*. The audience left the meeting with a storehouse of knowledge that would assist them in avoiding some of the pitfalls in their clinical practices.

I can also recall talking to postdoctoral students who had undertaken a clinical or laboratory study and were disheartened and discouraged when their data revealed negative results. It was then the task of the thesis committee chairman to inform them that negative data can often be just as important to publish as positive data.

Readers are urged to share failures with their colleagues. Some of these failures warrant publication in the dental literature. After all, it is what you learn after you "know it all" that really counts.

