

Editorial

Some Musings on Our DC Meeting

The 61st annual session of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, held in Washington, DC, last May was on many levels a successful and historic meeting, attracting a near-record registration of more than 4700 attendees. The founding fathers of AAPD would be extremely proud of the growth of their association from its origins as a 100-member club founded not long after the end of World War II. AAPD has become wonderfully diverse in its racial, ethnic, geographic, gender, and professional makeup. This diversity is evident to anyone who has attended an annual session in the last decade or two, and particularly in recent years as we have opened our membership rolls to general dentists and others who share our vision of optimal oral health for all children. From this diversity the organization is better able to advocate for a broad range of children whose economic and minority status place them among those in greatest need of oral health care services.

We have recognized that pediatric dentists alone cannot provide the care that is needed to combat the silent epidemic of childhood dental disease, prompting us to open our doors to our colleagues in general practice several years ago. They have representation on the Academy's Board of Trustees, and their voice is being heard. The Academy's first continuing education course designed specifically for general dentists is in the final planning stages for presentation in April 2009. Its success will likely mandate that it become a fixture in the annual cycle of AAPD course offerings. Pediatric dentistry is, in my opinion, unique among the dental specialties in that we have long been willing to share our knowledge with others. Our reaching out to general practitioners is a natural extension of that willingness to share and our desire to help children.

I was pleased to see a great number of residents and newly-minted pediatric dentists at the DC meeting. More than half of our new active, affiliate, and post-doctoral members are women, and 57% of our new members are under 30 years old. Our U.S. pediatric dentistry residency programs offered nearly 300 new positions in 2007-08, and that number is expected to increase to more than 330 for 2008-09. This dramatic increase in training slots will continue to provide a more youthful look to the membership, offsetting the "graying" trend that was a concern just a few years ago. Many of these new members are already involved in the governance of the Academy, and their input will be significant.

I was impressed, too, by the quality of the research presented by our active and post-doctoral members. Pediatric dentistry lends itself to a wide range of academic and scientific endeavors,

and that was reflected in the variety of clinical and basic science topics among the papers presented. I was in awe of the research presented by our residents, in particular by those who were recognized among the AAPD's resident research award programs. I expect to see these studies in print in our journals in the near future, and I can only hope that some of those residents will be entering careers in academics and research. Our academic ranks are thinning, but that's a topic for another day.

If you have not already read the annual report of our Executive Director (now Chief Executive Officer), John Rutkauskas, I urge you do so. It provides a wealth of information on the many activities and initiatives being undertaken by your Academy. Indeed, it will open your eyes as to how much our relatively small organization is able to accomplish—the Head Start Dental Home Initiative, our lobbying efforts on Capitol Hill, the range of continuing education programs, the quality of our publications, and much more—through the efforts of our member volunteers and a dedicated and talented Headquarters Office staff.

Finally, we should recognize two historic precedents, one that ended and another that began at the 61st annual session—the transition of leadership from our first non-U.S. president, Keith Morley, to our first woman president, Beverly Largent. Dr. Morley, a Canadian, ably led our Academy with his energy, wit, wisdom, and can-do attitude. He will be missed, though I know he will remain active in the association wherever his talents are needed. Dr. Largent is no newcomer to organized dentistry and the Academy. She is a past president of the Kentucky Dental Association and the Kentucky Society of Pediatric Dentistry. At the national level, Dr. Largent has been a member of the American Dental Association's Council of Ethics, Bylaws, and Judicial Affairs, and is currently a delegate to the ADA House of Delegates. In her 20-year history with AAPD, she has served in many capacities, including Trustee-at-Large. Dr. Largent is a Diplomate of the American Board of Pediatric Dentistry and a Fellow of the American College of Dentists. I look forward to continuing to work with her, as I know the Academy is in capable hands. Congratulations, Beverly!


Editor-in-Chief