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SMALLER WORLD— BIGGER COMMUNITY

In a universe where we can literally connect with anyone anywhere at any time, we may know more people but do we know each other as well?

At my first Annual AACD Scientific Session in 1996 (San Diego, CA), I was immediately struck by the camaraderie among our members. They were passionate about dentistry, loved being infused with the energy that occurred at our annual scientific session, and relished getting together with colleagues who shared their ambitions.

At that time, our membership numbered 2,382 dentists and laboratory technicians. Touching base with an AACD member was fairly easy. The directory was thin and if you'd been around awhile there was a good chance you personally knew many of the members. People took full advantage of the situation to form significant friendships with their AACD brethren.

Logistically, holding a meeting was relatively easy. Because of its size, a host of locations could accommodate the AACD's annual scientific session, and attendees came from all over the world. Though the world was large, our members felt an extraordinary bond that was strengthened through shared experiences within our Academy. They took pleasure in being a part of a small group that held a unique niche in dentistry. I cannot say how many times I've heard about the days when the entire group of dentists, laboratory technicians, and their spouses would gather around a single resort pool to talk, laugh, and revel in their special bond. No matter from where they traveled, it was easy to feel connected—it might have been a *big world*, but they were a *small community*.

As with any successful organization, growth expanded our ranks and affected the group dynamics. Annual conference attendance grew. The directory swelled to the point that printing it annually was no longer prudent in the digital world. Regardless of the venue, the "gang" could no longer fit around a swimming pool, and staying in touch became more difficult. Time had to be planned effectively in order to see all of your friends. The annual scientific session was becoming so large that you actually might not be able to run into people you were hoping to see!

Now that the AACD was larger, new opportunities and responsibilities presented themselves. As our reach extended further in the world, the demand for more effective

communication increased. It was evident that our former methods of communication had become outmoded and that systems needed to evolve.

The challenge became finding ways to evolve systems in a manner that would maintain the collegial atmosphere that had made membership in the AACD so desirable in the first place. That's quite a tall order in an age when we have more "digital time" and less "face time," especially when our fraternal connections now extend far beyond the geographical borders of our membership.

In response to this challenge, the AACD has been working hard to develop organizational partnerships. We should feel extremely positive about the relationships that have been cultivated with a number of groups, including the Academy of General Dentistry, the American Academy of Implant Dentistry, and the American Board of Implantology. In fighting for our common position on the advocacy of our credentials, we have demonstrated that we can have more success when presenting as a unified front.

In the past few years, we have also built synergy with the American Academy of Esthetic Dentistry (AAED) by identifying common objectives and finding ways to mutually evolve our science for the betterment of the entire dental profession. A large contingent of AACD members attended last summer's AAED-sponsored International Federation of Esthetic Dentistry meeting in Las Vegas. There was no doubt that our members had a valuable educational experience and enjoyed the camaraderie of their colleagues at the event; the connection was evident.

Plans are under way for the Fall 2010 AACD International Meeting in London. The meeting will be co-sponsored by AACD Affiliates—the British Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, the Dental University of Paris Study Group, the Swedish Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, and the German Society of Cosmetic Dentistry—and by the European Society of Cosmetic Dentistry. I am sure that it will not be the last time the AACD goes "across the pond" to celebrate our core values of inclusion, diversity, education, and community with our international colleagues.

I also am proud to announce that the AACD and the Japanese Academy of Esthetic Dentistry have entered into an organizational "sister relationship" to facilitate our common objectives related to education. These efforts were initiated during preparations for our 2009 meeting in Hawaii and a special camaraderie developed. In addition to hosting delegations at our respective future meetings, there are plans to share journal articles and speakers.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED

Our Professional Education Committee is making a dedicated effort to incorporate more evidence-based speakers and research in our educational offerings. Dr. Hugh Flax and I were honored to represent the AACD at the Prosthodontic Forum at the recent American College of Prosthodontics meeting in San Diego. The forum's agenda included dialog to identify and address various threats to our profession. Issues such as the evolving laboratory technician crisis and increasing the effectiveness of teaching fundamental prosthodontic principles in our dental schools were covered. At the Chicago Mid-Winter meeting in February, I will have the distinct honor to lecture from the podium at the American Prosthodontic Society, demonstrating our respect and reverence for evidence-based dentistry and indispensable dental principles. The increased communication has generated a great deal of understanding and respect where little existed a short time ago.

Advancements in communication technology are responsible for

providing new vehicles of education. eLearning opportunities over the Internet give our members excellent educational opportunities, no matter how remote their location. In addition, access to the AACD spirit need not occur at the annual scientific session alone. Because of the well-received regional meeting concept, this spirit can be captured multiple times a year.

With all of this ground to cover, the AACD Board of Directors is dedicating resources to help us reliably combine traditional modes of communication with the networking opportunities and virtual tools that modern technology allows. Having different ways for our membership to communicate will help maintain the collegial atmosphere that began so long ago around that resort swimming pool.

In some ways, technological advances have made the world seem smaller. Instead of speaking with geographically close colleagues about the treatment of a particular case (as I used to do in the early stages of my career), our members

can now easily communicate with anyone of their choosing, *anywhere in the world*. Our Accreditation Examiners exercise this philosophy on a daily basis as they mentor candidates from across the globe to help them successfully complete their Accreditation cases.

There was a time when the world was large and we were a small community. While we may not be able to fit around the same swimming pool any longer, we are bound and determined to retain the camaraderie that has been present in this Academy since its inception. The change in dynamics of our organization simply means we are going to have to do it in a different way. *The world seems smaller now, and we are a big community.*

My best wishes to you and yours,



Michael R. Sesemann, DDS
President

AACD Accredited Fellow Member
(FAACD), GBAS Volunteer

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