

Research and compassion

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In the late sixties, Professor Fred Hossack undertook a Dental Odyssey, travelling to the four corners of Dentistry Southern Africa and including a visit to the then Rhodesia. The motivation for this momentous journey was in pursuit of a dream, a vision that the Association could become a major player in the development of the profession. Even at that stage, Professor Hossack was known as The Grand Old Man of Dentistry... he continued to practice as a prosthodontist right into his late seventies. How well he deserved that appellation, that accord. His was the inspiration for an enterprise which has become a beacon in the achievements and activities of the Association.

On his visits to the Branches he presented his concepts, his dream that the profession could be a catalyst in the stimulation of researchers young and mature, who could make contributions to the advancement of our discipline. There were established at that time two funds... the Dentistry Development Fund and the Research, Education and Development Fund, fondly known as the RED fund. That Professor Hossack and his team were nobly successful is borne out most eloquently by the Honours Boards housed (but not currently displayed) at the Head Office of the Association. Since inception of the funds, there have been numerous awards each year.

The Dentistry Development Fund and the RED Fund grew and expanded. Successive Boards of Trustees, together with professional advisors, have managed the funds with exemplary care, enabling the continued support of research and travel for the benefit of the profession. Those receiving awards are required to present a detailed report on the conclusion of their project together with a paper submitted to the Journal for consideration for publication. The Funds were later consolidated into one entity, the Dentistry Development Foundation of South Africa, the first trustees being Len Becker, Fred Hossack, Gerald Knoetze, Mervyn Shear, Ken Titlestad and Roux Wentzel. So the Grand Old Man of Dentistry maintained an active role in the enterprise throughout.

Applications are required in considerable detail, enabling the Board to make rational and considered decisions and awards are made to a generous level. A formula is applied in the case of Travel Grants, which is related to the distances involved in the journeys. As with Research grants, recipients of the Travel Grants are required to submit a report, in this instance to the Trustees.

The objectives of the Foundation are succinctly described in the Trust Deed: *to assist financially or otherwise through the provision of grants in the holding of congresses, conferences, lectures, meetings, symposia, public education programmes, seminars for the study, definition or improvement of dental practices or such other activity in the field of dental, natural or applied science for the extension of knowledge.* The objectives have expanded considerably over the intervening years since Fred Hossack undertook his stimulating journey! In 2014, the Trust awarded grants to an amount close to one million rand. The Trust Fund is independent of the Association but it is the Association and its members who are justly proud to know that through their efforts in supporting the establishment of and in contributing to the Fund, significant strides in developing Dentistry have been made possible.

There are always obverse and converse sides to all enterprises. Lets flip over and consider a radically different Fund... the Benevolent Fund. The Association has for many years managed a Fund whose objectives are quite simple... but most laudatory.... namely to offer some support to colleagues whose fortunes have foundered, whose health is faltering, who face an uncertain future. There are a small number of dentists amongst our community who receive each month a small grant through the Benevolent Fund. Unlike the DDFT which has some safety in resources, the Benevolent Fund continues to rely on contributions from members. And the time is rapidly approaching when the monies will dry up. So the contrast may be drawn... the Association is markedly successful in stimulating our younger members to conduct research, to travel to congresses, to attend Branch meetings...but we are not so conscious, nor so conscientious, about looking after less fortunate older colleagues who have made their contributions to Dentistry South Arica over so many years.

This Communique places an appeal to all members to support the Benevolent Fund... let the memory of Fred Hossack invoke a commitment to ensure that the Association may continue its work as a supporter not only of research but also of colleagues who can no longer rely on their professional prowess to survive. They remain an integral part of the dental community.

Donors should contact the CEO, Maretha Smit in the first place but should also be alert to the PLEDGE button which will be available on our new website, scheduled for August. Every appreciation.

