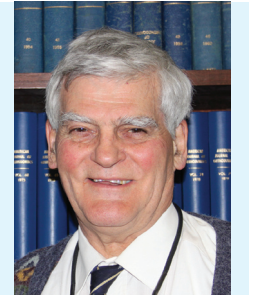


Continuous growth

SADJ March 2016, Vol 71 no 2 p50

WG Evans



There has been enough time after the 2016 Congress to reflect on the multi-faceted structure that is demanded in the building of such an enterprise. From the first conceptual foundation to the final realisation of the last idea, it is a work of inspiration. The Organising Committee led by Marilize van der Linde is warmly congratulated on their achievement. And yet the Congress never actually ends, for the messages received are carried beyond and into practice by the delegates, thereby enhancing South African dentistry. It is always intriguing to view the programme dispassionately. We are after all a small profession, dealing intensely with a small focus of attention. BUT, stand back a little, take the open view and there will develop a clear realisation of just how broad and deep and infinite are the implications of our responsibilities in caring for our patients. One of the more important responsibilities lies in the selection of the information offered. As independent practitioners it is open to our choice as to what changes we may effect post-Congress ... that procedure so well outlined by the lecturer in Hall A... or that guidance detailed by the eloquence in Hall B? That is the quintessential essence of Congress attendance. Contrary opinions, differing approaches, controversy and contradiction. Of considerable fascination was the observation that at one side of the 2016 Congress venue a lecturer was extolling, with wonderful evidence, the benefits of working with microscopes, whilst at the other end and with impressive energy and humour, another presenter was challenging the rationality of using such advanced, complicated .. and expensive, equipment! Delegates could select..... and determine to some extent how their practices may then evolve.

Every issue of the Journal is a microcosm of a Congress. The reader may elect to read (attend) a paper of particular interest ..or may wish to explore a new focus. The net effect is the same... determine and consider the data , decide how this may be applicable to daily practice. So when the Journal presents papers on the more abstruse topics in Dentistry, these are no less of import than an explicit clinical guideline. In this issue, a paper dealing with the relative penetration of hydrogen peroxide in endodontics has immediate clinical impact... considering the expanded role of the cells rests of Malassez will contribute to an understanding of the biology of our field and enhance respect for the complexities of the tissues on which we rely to ensure healthy mouths.

Are we blessed ...or cursed... with the imperative to constantly seek new knowledge?

Dentistry raises enquiries in even the most bizarre of circumstances. Residing close to Hoedspruit are two famous living things... Jessica the Hippo and a 2000 year old Baobab tree. They are linked, somewhat tenuously, by both having the term 'pachy' in their scientific references.. pachyderm.. 'thick skin' for the hippo, pachypodia –'thick leg' for the tree.

Whilst the Baobab may best be known for its 'upside down' appearance when in winter the bare branches resemble nothing so much as a complex system of roots (the upside down tree), Jessica Hippopotamus allows human contact to the extent of a kiss on the nose!! She has been living with her human hosts these past many years and shows every sign of extreme contentment with her life! BUT she has a malocclusion!! The upper lateral incisors are distally tipped! In fact this discrepancy does allow greater confidence when she is being fed by hand, for there is a gap in the occlusion through which a tasty sweet potato disc may be tossed! The etiology of the displaced laterals is obscure. But the biologic principles of orthodontics would apply equally well to *hippopotamus amphibius* as to *sapiens homo*. There would be one most relevant factor... the hippo canines and incisors are open pulp teeth and grow continuously, occlusive abrasion keeping them within bounds, and in the case of the canines, extremely sharp!! So, a challenge to research.. do open pulp teeth actually respond well to tooth moving forces?? (Dilaceration is the likely result.) .

There is always some dental stimulation, whether in oscillatory contact with a hippo... or in intellectual contact with erudite visiting lecturers at a Congress. Either way, continuous growth in the discipline is ensured.