OBITUARY IB Bender and Sam Seltzer in memorial

Within the past 12 months, and almost within half a year of each other, the lives of two most highly praised scholars in Endodontology, IB Bender and Sam Seltzer, have come to an end. For well over six decades. together or separately, they contributed extensively to the endodontic and pulp biology literature. In the 1960s papers by Bender and Seltzer or Seltzer and Bender became synonymous with critical and challenging observations on the nature, diagnosis and clinical management of the disease processes associated with the dental pulp. Over 40 articles, carrying both their names, were published in prestigious dental journals. Reports were primarily on experimental studies carried out on either laboratory animals or human beings. The textbook The Dental Pulp, a now classic piece of work, was issued in 1965. For years this text has served as a key reference to numerous scientists, clinicians and students world-wide, as it not only reviewed their own findings, but also carefully interpreted the relevant literature available at the time.

Although IB and Sam both maintained a high degree of scientific and scholarly activity much beyond normal retirement age (IB still published papers and lectured world-wide in his 90th year), it is the period between 1960 and 1970 that must be considered their most important and which generated a series of provocative and still cited observations. Well-known titles are 'Roentgenographic and direct observations of experimental lesions in bone' (Bender IB, Seltzer S, J Am Dent Assoc 1961; 62: 152-60, and 708-16; both papers recently re-published in the Journal of Endodontics), 'The dynamics of pulp inflammation: correlation between diagnostic data and actual histologic findings in the pulp' (Seltzer S, Bender IB, Ziontz M, Oral Surg 1963; 16: 967-77 and 846-71), 'The interrelationship of pulp and periodontal disease' (Seltzer S, Bender IB,

Ziontz M, *Oral Surg* 1963; **16**: 1474–90), 'To culture or not to culture?' (Bender IB, Seltzer S, Turkenkopf S, *Oral Surg* 1964; **18**: 527–40).

The paper that I personally like the best is the one entitled 'Cognitive dissonance in endodontics' (*Oral Surg* 1965; 20: 505–16). This time the publication was not about research findings. It was an article debating the scientific basis or rather lack of scientific basis for the prevailing treatment concepts in endodontics. The paper, in particular, took issue with the culturing technique, then in vogue, for testing of the extent bacterial organisms were eliminated prior to filling and questioned the notion that bacteria can ever be eliminated from a root canal that is once infected. That issue, as we are well aware, is still under debate.

It is clear that in their publication IB and Sam were calling for improved knowledge as to the critical factors that may decide success or failure in endodontics. The way, in which the paper was interpreted, however, was probably not what they had expected. Not only was culturing of root canals abandoned in the years that followed; many in the dental community also began to downgrade bacterial elimination as a critical step in the management of infected root canals. Yet, I feel this paper is a most important one because we can learn from it that we should more often sit back and reflect on where we are and where we should be going in dental science. Too seldom do we argue in the way IB and Sam did in their paper from 1965 and too seldom do we question 'our views, attitudes and beliefs which are inconsistent or incompatible with one another'. Both these legends are greatly missed by all of us who had the good fortune to meet them and learn from their vast experience and wisdom.

Gunnar Bergenholtz

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