



A tribute from Professor AHR (Jack) Rowe, former Dean of Guy's Dental School and Head of the Department of Conservative Dentistry

Thomas Russell Pitt Ford, the son of a Guy's dentist, entered the Dental School at Guy's Hospital in 1967. I would have met him at the end of the Preclinical Course in Operative Dentistry in 1969 when his group started to treat patients in the Conservation Department. I was approached by an anxious lady in the Records Department asking if it was in order to give this new student a large number of patients. I requested the name of the individual and it was Tom Pitt Ford. As I had not had any complaints from the staff I assured her that it was OK. At that time the students had to complete certain targets of work in three and a half years before taking Finals. In just a year, Tom had nearly completed them and before qualification he already had considerable clinical experience.

Tom passed the LDS RCS in October and the BDS London in 1971 with honours in Prosthetic Dentistry. He went on to take the FDS RCPS in Glasgow in 1975 and was awarded a PhD in London in 1980 for his study of the *in vivo* biological response to various root canal sealers. He obtained the FDS RCS Edinburgh in 2000 and the FDS RCS England in 2005.

After obtaining the BDS exam he worked part time in General Practice with his father and then I was pleased to have him as a part-time lecturer in the Conservation Department at Guy's. He undertook the routine supervision of student's work and was a very reliable member of staff. He was made a full time Lecturer in 1981 and a Senior Lecturer in 1982. He conducted introductory courses in the 'Phantom Head' Department with small groups and then supervised their work in the clinics and until 1990s he regularly carried out chair-side teaching of Conservative Dentistry at all levels.

Tom had three or four sessions a week devoted to research and decided to investigate in detail the biological effects of various commercial materials on the dental pulp and apical tissues. He asked me to supervise his work for a PhD. This task was simple as he reported to me on a regular basis what he had been doing and the results of his work, and all I could do was to commend him for the work he had carried out. He

completed the experiments and thesis in good time and was awarded the PhD.

Another of Tom's roles between 1986 and 1997 was as Postgraduate Dental Tutor and he organised many courses for House Officers and General Practitioners, and courses for the Primary FDS. He took all these activities in his stride and was never flustered.

Tom and I discussed the need for an MSc programme in Endodontics. He planned the course, which was approved by the University of London. This was the first postgraduate degree in Endodontics in the UK. Tom organised the programme of lectures and seminars and supervised the clinical treatment and the research projects of the students. The first programme started in October 1988 and he subsequently supervised a total of 35 students for the Masters Degree and 7 PhD students. Tom was made a Reader in Endodontics in 1995 and appointed as Professor of Endodontology in 1998 – the first person in Britain to hold this title.

In 1998, Guy's Dental School, the Dental School at King's College Hospital and St. Thomas merged with Kings College London to form the Dental Institute of Kings College. Tom was very involved in developing the new curriculum and later amended the curriculum as required by the GDC. In 1997 he was appointed Vice Dean of the Dental Institute and in 2002 was appointed as Director of Education in the Institute. This position carried the responsibility for ensuring the effective delivery of the undergraduate and postgraduate taught degree programmes. Tom was presented with the Alumnus Distinguished Service Award in March 2008. In addition to these leadership and management roles, Tom continued to act as an examiner for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees both in London and other Universities.

As you have read in the tribute by Dag Ørstavik, much of Tom's research was devoted to studying the biocompatibility of various materials used in Operative Dentistry, as well as pulp capping agents, materials used in root canals, and those in contact with periapical tissues. Later work was concerned with the effect of bacterial contamination. He also investigated

the use of Laser Doppler flowmetry following traumatic injuries to determine the vitality of the pulp in anterior teeth in children. Further work was carried out on the biological response to surgical root-end procedures. Of particular note was the use of a new material, a mineral trioxide aggregate (MTA), which gave excellent results confirmed in a clinical outcome study. The material is now available commercially.

Tom's research was supported by many grants from a variety of sources and in total exceeded £245,000. He published 116 papers in refereed scientific journals and 11 papers in other journals. He wrote a number of text books including *The Restoration of Teeth*, which was also published in Polish and Indonesian. He was co-author, with Dag Ørstavik, of *Essential Endodontology*, now in its second edition. In addition, he revised *Harty's Endodontics in Clinical Practice* 4th and 5th editions and co-authored *Endodontics – Problem solving in Clinical Practice* and *Local Anaesthesia in Dentistry*.

Tom had an extremely busy life but rarely looked stressed and even had time to treat patients himself. He was also a competent electrician, an expert plumber, builder and decorator. He was also a keen gardener. Tom leaves his wife Heather, a daughter and two sons to whom we extend our deep sympathy.

References

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