



**Commentary by Ram Nair**

**Nair PNR, Duncan HF, Pitt Ford TR, Luder HU (2008)**

**Histological, ultrastructural and quantitative investigations on the response of healthy human pulps to experimental capping with Mineral Trioxide Aggregate: a randomized controlled trial.**

***International Endodontic Journal* 41, 128–50**

*A friend and learned colleague remembered*

An e-mail from Dr Heather Pitt Ford to me on Monday, 18 August 2008, carried the grave message that in the early hours on the previous day, 'Tom passed away peacefully in his sleep, at home'. Professor Thomas (Tom) Pitt Ford was yet to reach the age of 59 in November 2008. The message shocked me although I knew that Tom had not been very well for quite sometime and had been under medical care. He recovered, at least so I thought, because he presided over the PG seminar that I gave to his students just 2 months before and enthusiastically engaged in the discussions that followed! It was also just 2 months earlier, in February 2008 that our collaborative research, reprinted here, found fruition in the *International Endodontic Journal*.

Tom and I were partners in the Mineral Trioxide Aggregate (MTA) research project initiated between me (Institute of Oral Biology, University of Zurich, Switzerland) and him (The Dental Institute, King's College London, UK), sometime in 2002. We knew that the success of the project depended on the convergence of high clinical skill and expertise on modern histomorphological processing and evaluation of the tooth material. Tom had extensive knowledge of MTA, as he was involved in the development of the material. Because of the heavy administrative load that he carried, it was obvious to Tom and me that we needed an able clinician to do the day-to-day clinical aspects of the project. During the course of the preliminaries of the project, Tom reached the choice in Dr Hal Duncan, as the suitable clinical partner for the project. This was the context in which Tom Pitt Ford, Hal Duncan and me worked together on the MTA project, thereby combining our resources and expertise.

The study was extensive yet comprehensive and was published in the February 2008 issue of the *International*

*Endodontic Journal* with selected illustrations from the paper appearing on the title page. The paper has been well received by the endodontic community, as we could judge from the numerous requests for PDFs and also enthusiastic reference to it in Endodontic conferences.

Tom has been a tall figure in the world of Endodontology. He has contributed much to the development of Endodontology in Britain, Europe and the World at large at various capacities as clinician, teacher, researcher, author, editor, administrator and organizer. Tom's major legacy will probably be his extensive publications in the form of original research papers, reviews and books, which he wrote and edited. As a contributing author to *Essential Endodontology* it was a pleasure for me to have worked with Tom as my editor. His departure at the prime age of 58 leaves a vacuum in the world of Endodontology.

I have known Tom since 1989 when we met for the first time in Amsterdam at the ESE conference. As the then editor of the *International Endodontic Journal*, he expressed appreciation for the 'well illustrated and written' paper that I published shortly before in the *Journal of Endodontics*. True to his character, Tom was reserved, soft-spoken and low-key in conversation. His serious demeanour masked the underlying sensitive and gentle person. Our casual acquaintance in Amsterdam eventually grew into various academic interactions, mutual respect, book-projects, collaborative research and friendship. Personally, I found Tom a modest, very gentle, honest, knowledgeable and trustworthy colleague with a great sense of subtle British humour. My wife Ruth and I feel very fortunate to have come to know Tom and his equally professional and gently supportive wife Heather.

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