

On Meeting the Co-Presidents of the International College of Prosthodontists: Regina Mericske-Stern and Kiyoshi Koyano

Once in a while, a dental meeting offers special insights into our discipline. The event's yield then becomes so much more memorable—provocative ideas worth nurturing, as opposed to mere acquisition of new techniques or presenters' pictorial proof of their more impressive clinical esthetic results. One such experience was the recent Academy of Prosthodontics presidential address by Jonathan Wiens, and I was delighted when he agreed to let me include his words as this issue's invited commentary, "Leadership, Stewardship, and Prosthodontic's Future." It also seemed like a perfect segue from short biographies of 2 distinguished leaders and stewards: Regina Mericske-Stern from Bern, Switzerland, and Kiyoshi Koyano from Fukuoka, Japan, who at the forthcoming September International College of Prosthodontists meeting will complete their current 2-year term as co-presidents. The ICP's commitment to developing a broad international focus has been exemplary indeed. This effort is reflected in the ICP's constitutional remit of the co-presidency, efforts to promote recognition of women in the discipline, support for educational workshops for early-career clinical educators, and insistence on holding biennial meetings in different parts of the world. Both co-presidents are well known and highly regarded in the international community; however, their different career trajectories demand elaboration as a way of underscoring what is most impressive in ICP leadership.



Regina Mericske-Stern grew up in Bern as 1 of 3 sisters. She was an avid student of languages and literature throughout her youth, and her early schooling led to a great deal of European travel, a teaching license, and even a position as an assistant teacher. She met and married Erno

Mericske, a Hungarian émigré and jazz pianist, soon after he graduated from the dental school in Bern, and gradually his interests and skills in the discipline influenced her to pursue a dental career. Her early exposure to Professor Andre Schroeder brought her into contact

with the brave new world of dental implants, and a subsequent sabbatical in Toronto further catalyzed her commitment to the world of prosthodontic rehabilitation. She has not looked back since, and her leadership and scholarship in the discipline led to her appointment as director and chair of the Bern prosthodontic department—the first female professor of dentistry in Switzerland. She is a very popular and highly regarded national and international presenter, and her predilected clinical research area of implant-supported overdentures is rigorously documented and widely cited. She maintains a blistering pace while administering her department, teaching both undergraduate and graduate students, running continuing education programs, and treating patients. She was the first Swiss female dentist to obtain a PD degree, to become the director and chairperson of a dental department, and to become president of the Swiss Society of Implantology. As the first Swiss dentist with a prosthodontic specialization, she has played a significant role in supervising numerous student theses and influencing other female candidates to take their specialty examinations. She has also served on numerous national committees, yet still finds time to read serious literature and play the violin.

She regards the ICP's strength as also being its weakness, and expresses her hopes and concerns for the organization in these terms:

"Internationalism, friendships, and networks that cross all borders are important for personal and professional progress. However, prosthodontics encompasses many subdisciplines and I sense a danger that the ICP may be diluted into subspecialties, thus sacrificing the understanding of the broad spectrum of prosthodontics. There is also a dichotomy between the technical and biological orientation and understanding of our discipline. Of course we need evidence-based research and the analytical outcomes of serious systematic reviews, but we also need clinically well-trained prosthodontists who know how to treat patients with skill and diligence. It is not always possible to find these desirable determinants in every academic colleague in every country.

"The biennial ICP conferences are a welcome occasion to meet good colleagues and exchange knowledge in all prosthodontic disciplines. However, we could consider the creation of additional structures and format our meetings so as to not to cover all topics every 2 years. I would also like the ICP to provide a platform for young graduate students to present case reports or clinical research without the demand for them to be ICP members. One new direction for the ICP was initiated at the Karlsruhe workshop this past October. I expect the ICP will reconsider its traditional presentation formats in an effort to appeal to a broad international constituency."



Kiyoshi Koyano obtained his DDS and PhD degrees from Kyushu University in Fukuoka, Japan. In 1991 he was selected by the Japanese government to proceed to the UCLA School of Dentistry in California. He spent the next 2 years carrying out research as a visiting associate professor in the Section of Gnathology and Occlusion and worked with Drs William Solberg and Glenn Clark.

He has been involved in both clinical practice and research in removable prosthodontics, implant prosthodontics, temporomandibular disorders, and the clinical physiology of the masticatory system. His current research interests on dental implants also include biomechanics. He has authored over 150 research articles, review papers, book chapters, and books. He has also served as a lecturer, panelist, and coordinator in many national and international conferences. Dr Koyano is currently the professor and chairman of the Department of Removable Prosthodontics and vice-director of Kyushu University Hospital.

He is currently the president of the International College of Prosthodontists and Asian Academy of Prosthodontics, as well as the vice-president of the Japan Prosthodontic Society (JPS). While serving as editor of the *Journal of Japan Prosthodontic Society*, he

improved the review system and focused on introducing the concept of evidence-based medicine and clinical research design. He also established academic cooperation between JPS and the Korean Academy of Prosthodontics, Chinese Prosthodontic Society, and Indian Prosthodontic Society. He worked as chair of the International Liaison Committee of JPS for 3 consecutive terms, during which he organized the first joint meeting between JPS and the Greater New York Academy of Prosthodontics in 2003 in New York City, as well as the second joint meeting in 2007 in Tokyo.

Professor Koyano works hard to find time to be with his family in spite of his hectic academic life. He regards the ICP as a natural extension of his commitment to scholarship and international leadership and sums up his views as follows:

"The ICP is the only international, almost worldwide academic organization in the field of prosthodontics. This offers a very desirable and unique opportunity for prosthodontists from all over the world to get together and exchange the latest information on clinical matters and research topics. This is also a good chance to be exposed to various cultural and social backgrounds and to cultivate friendships and academic contacts.

"Through these activities, we are offered the opportunity to improve our knowledge and appreciation for prosthodontic care, which in turn improve our own patients' oral health as well as the health of other patients around the world. I happily admit that I gained and learned a lot from my ICP experience. The gain was not only academic and clinical, but also cultural and social, as I was granted insight into the backgrounds of various countries. On top of that, I was able to get to know many colleagues from across the world and form lasting friendships."

It does not seem imprudent to suggest that a strong and gratifying convergence exists between Jonathan Wiens' thoughts and the leadership role already self-evident in our incumbent co-presidents' academic lives.

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