

## On Renewed Fall Activities

My Mediterranean upbringing did not prepare me for the visual pleasures of a Canadian autumn, or the fall, as it is aptly referred to over here. This year offered the usual wondrous color explosions, with lingering late-summer warmth to accompany the daily strolls and gentle crunching of October leaves underfoot. It is also a relatively new and joyous reminder that the start of a new academic year does not carry the same resonance it once did. It has been 2 years since I stopped greeting the season with the annual mix of excitement and anxiety elicited by new mandated challenges, along with regret that the summer days were over. There would be no repeats for me of a 40-year era of rigorous scheduling and the sinking feeling that there would never be enough time to undertake all the planned assignments.

Today, there is no rigid template for my new life. I control my time as I please—except for my weekly single day of treating patients—as I edit this journal and travel abroad, though no longer exclusively on lecturing assignments. The latter are now planned sojourns to visit old friends and make new ones—enriching intervals with gently placed teaching interludes.

This fall, I visited Mainland China and then Fukuoka, Japan for one more superb ICP meeting, and then traveled on to Taiwan, Hawaii, and most recently Dublin, Ireland. It continues to be gratifying to find such an explosion of interest in academic prosthodontics, and above all such a profound appreciation for what this journal of ours represents. It all resonated particularly in the familiar refrain from both older and

younger colleagues that clinical academic careers still offer enormous fulfillment. The dual satisfaction of teaching and learning was repeatedly asserted, although concerns about limited structured time for clinical research continue to threaten the scholarly integrity of purpose. It seems that most dental schools continue to fail to appreciate that careers in clinical scholarship demand protected time, and that the very nature of caring for patients makes serious inroads into the academic's timetable. Furthermore, the inevitable administrivia can combine with the triteness and frustration of committee assignments to further compromise scholarly progress.

It was all familiar territory of course; a predicament that Sreenivas Koka (an important member of our Editorial Board) suggested was aptly reflected in his Mayo Clinic colleague's recent editorial in *Endocrine Practice*. I obtained the necessary permissions to include Dr F. John Service's incisive piece in this issue, since I too presumed that it would elicit amused recognition in our international readership. It seems that academic medicine demands similar humorous tolerance from its loyalists. The challenge for the developing scholar is to not only be protected from the sort of committee culture Dr Service so wittily refers to, but to keep insisting that the essential agenda of protecting clinical scholarly time be given absolute priority.

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## The Importance of Being Important

*"...some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em.'"*

Acknowledging the possibility of a rare exception, I nevertheless hold to the position that none of us consorts with a person destined from the womb to be important and, furthermore, only rarely may any of us encounter, in our professional activities, a colleague whose importance stems entirely from merit. For the most part, we associate with those who have been elevated to a rank or position of importance. Almost

universally, these persons have similar and readily recognizable characteristics. The initial transformation among the *nouveaux importants* is the rooting of the delusion that their innate worth, previously oblivious to their peers, has been validated by the very act of elevation. They view themselves as having been plucked from the dross of commonality like overlooked nuggets to be placed in their rightful positions of importance. These individuals commit the cardinal error of confusing the importance of the new task or rank to which they have been assigned with their own

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