

## On Karlsruhe III

The old saying that a life lived well moves backwards continues to resonate with my recent retirement from academia, and that of this past year from clinical private practice. An overnight self-diagnosis of virtual anonymity—or a nano-size role in the overall scheme of prosthodontic scholarship—certainly helped, but it was also mitigated by a far clearer sense of how much still needs to be done for our discipline, especially in graduate education. The late Dr Martin Luther King Jr stated that, “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.” He was, of course, addressing universal concerns for law and human dignity that are inarguably far more compelling than my teaching-related ones. However, his observation may be applied to the silence of those clinical educators who believe in a scholarly pedigree that denies challenge.

Several accepted educational tenets (from undue focus on dental laboratory training to heavy ones on writing scientific papers) have not evolved in directions demanded by diverse and exciting electronic media availability, biotechnologic achievements, and socioeconomic issues. It is readily conceded that curricular changes and staff recruitment for graduate programs continue to be plagued by funding problems and a reduced pool of potential clinical academic leaders. However, the training of our young clinical teachers should look outside exclusive traditional frames of reference in an effort to develop alternative insights and directions.

I risk stretching a point here, but I was motivated and engaged by the provocative debate accompanying the publication of Amy Chua's recent book, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*. The author is a Yale Law School professor who argues that tough love is the key to raising successful children, and hers is a bracing critique of particular parenting styles. David Brooks' reaction to the book was a brilliant op-ed in the *New York Times*. He argued for a more eclectic interpretation of other skills that teaching and learning entail, in addition to the obvious ones. He observed that most people who work in groups are much more efficient at solving problems than individuals and emphasized that the performance of a group does not correlate well with the average IQ of the group, or even with the IQs of the smartest members. He noted that researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology report that, “Groups have a high collective intelligence when members of a group are good at reading each others' emotions—when they take turns speaking, when the inputs from each member are managed fluidly, when they detect each others' inclinations and strengths.” This was a strong reminder that group participation can be very challenging, since it depends on “the ability to trust people outside your kinship circle, read intonations and moods, understand how the psychological pieces each person brings to the room can and cannot fit together. This skill set is not taught formally,

but it is imparted through arduous experiences.” Brooks' thoughts clearly apply to both children in learning situations as well as to graduate clinical programs, and my own personal experiences with group educational activities led me to similar conclusions. Shared scholarship and humanitarian concerns with exceptional Toronto colleagues ensured that the arduous experience of group analyses and debate were informed and guided by reported and published experiences. This resulted in understanding the best patient care in a context that reconciled service, education, and research in the discipline. And in recent years, I worked in similar fashion with a select group from the IJP's extraordinary editorial faculty to run biennial Karlsruhe workshops for 36 young prosthodontic educators with equally gratifying results. Our last workshop was held this past October and again made possible by a repeat pro bono effort from Winfried Walther, John Hobkirk, and Sree Koka (my organizational partners) and the superb teaching skills of James Anderson, David Bartlett, Franco Bassi, Nico Creugers, Pierre de Grandmont, Steven Eckert, Aaron Fenton, Michael MacEntee, Ignace Naert, Jörg Strub, Terry Walton, Shane White, and Nicola Zitzmann.

It should also be emphasized that well-planned and executed workshops only happen if they are adequately funded, and Nobel Biocare came through once again with repeat generous support. Ours is a welcome alliance that enables us to provide for young prosthodontic educators the sort of scholarly exposure that big meetings are unlikely to match. And it is all done without any strings attached—a generous and welcome example of educational support and good will, plus the vision of Robert Gottlander. In fact, Nobel Biocare has already agreed to support Karlsruhe IV, which will move to Baden Baden in June 2012. This will be a slightly bigger workshop than previous ones, since attendance will be open to past attendees as well as new ones. The International College of Prosthodontists also contributed directly to workshop budgets, as well as indirectly via travel attendance support for a select number of attendees. The ICP's support continues to be appreciated.

There is something of quintessence about these workshops—a singular collection of good minds committed to a common scholarly purpose in the presence of eager young clinical teachers-in-the-making, and, above all, carried out in a manner that seeks to be intellectually supple and demanding while underscoring the bonds of civility that bind us in our collective scholarly pursuit. Ours are indeed arduous experiences but very fulfilling ones. They must continue if our young prosthodontic educators are going to expand their vistas as the century progresses.

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Group photograph of the IJP faculty and international participants from 22 countries who attended the October 2010 workshop at Karlsruhe, Germany.

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