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## 2000 Special Merit Award for Outstanding Achievement in Community Dentistry—International: John J. Clarkson, BDS, MA, PhD

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**Presented by B. Alex White, DDS, DrPH**

Two years ago, the American Association of Public Health Dentistry instituted a new award to recognize the contributions of our international colleagues in improving the public's oral health. This year, the AAPHD is pleased to recognize Dr. John J. Clarkson by presenting him with the Special Merit Award for Outstanding Achievement in Community Dentistry—International.

Professor John Clarkson is dean of the Dental School and Hospital, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland, and professor and consultant in Public Dental Health and Community Services. He was previously chair of the Department of Public and Child Dental Health, which includes public health, orthodontics, pediatrics, and integrated patient care. He was recently elected vice president of the International Association for Dental Research.

Dr. Clarkson served as executive director of the IADR/AADR from 1990 to 1998, where he managed the association's fiscal, administrative, publishing, and conference activities and was responsible for promoting the in-

terests of dental research in the United States and worldwide.

Professor Clarkson was born in Mullingar, Ireland, and attended secondary school at Oatlands College, Mount Merrion, County Dublin, graduating in 1958. After obtaining his bachelor of dental surgery degree from University College, Dublin in 1964, he worked in general dental practice in Ireland and England for five years. He returned to Ireland to join the Public Health Service in Dublin, where he obtained a senior appointment. Professor Clarkson joined the Department of Health in 1980, where he reached the rank of deputy chief dental officer. He obtained his doctoral degree in 1987 from University College, Cork, for his research on "Enamel defects in fluoridated and nonfluoridated areas in Ireland" and for his research on indices of enamel defects.

Professor Clarkson has held appointments as associate clinical professor in the University of Maryland at Baltimore, as a consultant with the World Health Organization's Collaborating Centre in University College, Cork, and as a consultant and member

of the Commission of the Fédération Dentaire Internationale (FDI). He served as member-at-large of the IADR board of directors and was elected to the executive committee of the Association for Dental Education in Europe in 1999.

Professor Clarkson is a member and has served as an officer of several international, dental, scientific, and professional organizations and is a referee for a number of international journals. He is a Fellow of Trinity College, the International College of Dentists, the American College of Dentists, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and Academy of Dentistry International.

I've highlighted only a few of the many achievements that Dr. Clarkson has made during his distinguished career. For these reasons and many more, we are pleased to recognize his work and thank him for his efforts. On behalf of the American Association of Public Health Dentistry, I am privileged to present the 2000 Special Merit Award for Outstanding Achievement in Community Dentistry—International to Dr. John Clarkson.

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## Remarks on Receiving the Special Merit Award for Outstanding Achievement in Community Dentistry—International

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**John J. Clarkson, BDS, MA, PhD**

**Delivered by Robert J. (Skip) Collins, DMD, MPH**

Please accept my sincere apologies for not attending the awards presentation today. I have been elected dean of the Dental School and Hospital, Trinity College, Dublin, and have a

number of major commitments in the university this particular week and because of this could not travel to Chicago.

I am deeply honored to receive the

Special Merit Award for Outstanding Achievement in Community Dentistry—International. Recognition by your peers, especially in your own specialty, is really an uplifting experi-

ence. It also tends to become a time of reflection on your life and career.

I graduated in dentistry in Dublin in 1964, the same year that fluoridation was introduced in Ireland. I certainly was not aware at that time of the key role fluoridation would play in improving oral health in Ireland and also its impact on my own career. I traveled to the UK and practiced in their National Health Service for six years. At the end of that period, I knew that style of dentistry was not for me and I joined the Public Health Service in Ireland in 1970. Dental disease was still rampant in Ireland and the Public Health Service was on overload. However, as always, a few people had the insight to stand back from the situation and develop a coordinated approach to the problems. Denis O'Mullane, Seamus O'Hickey, and Joe Lemasney were among these people, and I was lucky to be involved with them. From that time my interest in public health developed. I became deputy chief dental officer in Ireland in 1980, at the same time as I was offered a place in a postgraduate program in Indiana. The Civil Service has a reputation for bureaucracy; however, the Department of Health, where I was based, was very helpful to me. They supported my

training and travel to complete a PhD in the epidemiology of fluoride, with particular reference to indices of fluorosis. My role in this area of research brought me into contact with individuals such as Bill Bowen, Grace Suckling, Hersch Horowitz, and Ole Fejerskov. I also became involved in IADR and was a founding member of the Irish Division. Incidentally, the key members of the division were from the public health sector in Ireland.

My involvement in IADR has been a wonderful experience. Promoting and developing research in a small country such as Ireland, and then having the opportunity to be executive director of the association, was like a fairy tale. My eight years in the United States were probably the most rewarding time of my career. The welcome I received from so many people was really marvelous and made my job much easier. During my stay in the United States, I got to know many of the people present at this meeting. Included of course is your President Dushanka Kleinman; Alex White, chair of the Awards and Nominations Committee; and Skip Collins, who is accepting the award on my behalf. I want to take this opportunity of thanking you for making me and my family feel at home in

the United States.

Well, the call of academic life brought me back to Ireland as professor of public dental health in Trinity. I have really enjoyed the past few years, working with students and developing the discipline of public health in the school. I hope to continue the strong profile of public health during my five-year term as dean of the school.

When I started my PhD in the 1980s, one senior civil servant said to me that I should choose a subject that would keep me going until I would get a pension (age 65). I decided to concentrate on fluoride and it will certainly keep me occupied well past pension time. We in Ireland are going through a particularly difficult time on fluoridation currently. The support we are getting from the ADA, CDC, and individual members of AAPHD has been very helpful. Hopefully, we will weather this storm.

The AAPHD is a wonderful association recognized throughout the world. I deeply appreciate this award from such a prestigious association. I plan to have an opportunity at another AAPHD meeting to express my thanks to the officers of the association. Thank you.