Members corner: Dr. Stuart Johnson

In this issue of WDC, we are pleased to have FDI Dental Practice Committee and Dental Amalgam Task Team (DATT) member, Dr. Stuart Johnson discuss his involvement with FDI World Dental Federation and share his vision for oral health.

As a practicing dentist, what made you decide to devote your time to addressing issues affecting dental practice at an international level? I initially became involved with organized dentistry at the local level because I was dissatisfied with the system of dentistry in the UK. After some time, I became Chairman of the local body and went on to represent the UK at the national level.

People gave me jobs to do and I didn’t say “no”. I enjoyed it … I enjoyed learning and actively making a better future for myself and colleagues in UK.

“Accidently” I had the opportunity to attend the FDI Congress in New Delhi, in 2004, as a representative of the British Dental Association. I wasn’t sure what to make of it at first, it seemed very complex. But after this experience, I reflected on the opportunities FDI involvement presented and quite liked it—the complexity of it, it was something completely new, I wanted to understand FDI, what we could do, how I could help raise the profile of my home association there.

There is a symbiotic relationship, representing BDA at FDI and bringing benefits back to dentists in the UK.

You were recently invited to join FDI Dental Amalgam Task Team (DATT). What is the rationale behind the formation of DATT? It is fascinating work—the way these colleagues have communicated with one another around the world, all cooperating, and the quality of debate is superb.

The FDI Council mandated that a Dental Amalgam Task Team (DATT) be established to ensure that the international dental community and issues regarding dental amalgam were properly and accurately represented in United Nations discussions regarding mercury and would be based on the best available science.


The DATT consists of a representative from each of the FDI standing committees, three Council representatives and where required be supplemented with subject matter experts.

Where does the DATT stand now and what role does it play in FDI overall mission? At the UNEP meeting in Stockholm, 7-11 June 2010, I was privileged to represent FDI Dental Amalgam Task Team. This meeting saw a continuation of the process begun in November and we had the opportunity to lobby delegates to our position to avoid an all-out amalgam ban. DATT is looking to develop information for member NDAs to take back to their countries to communicate with their governments directly. It will be governments who vote on this, so we require a team effort to achieve the desired result.

In regards to dental amalgam, it is not a health issue because the dental profession has a significant body of evidence that the use of amalgam as a restorative material is safe with respect to human health. However it is the broader considerations with regards to mercury that the intergovernmental negotiating committee is addressing.

Is FDI developing a position on environmental waste? We must be seen as doing everything we can, including:

• Make sure all waste is collected properly in dental surgery and properly disposed of and recycled wherever possible, to avoid contamination.
• Move away from bulk mercury, which can be misappropriated for small scale gold mining, towards capsule mercury, which avoids spillage.

What does the FDI World Dental Federation offer to the dentist? For more than a decade, the FDI’s World Dental Development Fund (WDDF) has made a difference to the lives of disadvantaged people in many places around the globe through its support of oral health education and outreach programmes.

Established in 1998, the World Dental Development Fund aims to improve oral health primarily in disadvantaged populations through education, oral health promotion, disease prevention and primary health care. The variety of projects that are funded highlights different approaches to better oral health in contrasting settings. Current projects range from capacity building in Africa, to improving oral health in rural India, through to integrating oral health in primary health care in northern Pakistan, and oral cancer awareness and HIV/AIDS awareness training for dentists in Latin America.

The World Dental Development and Health Promotion Committee, the body responsible for the management of the World Dental Development Fund within FDI, recently completed a project in Cambodia. Here, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and hepatitis is one of the highest in South-East Asia. Due to the lack of established standards and training materials regarding infection control for dental personnel, the Cambodian Dental Association proposed a project to develop a national cross infection control programme in collaboration with governmental, non-governmental agencies and individuals, and supported by the FDI member association are encouraged.

The numerous applications received from community organisations and initiatives highlights the enormous need for effective oral health programmes. FDI invites well-wishers to support this very important work by making donations to the WDDF, so that we are able to expand and sustain the funds successful activities. For more information: www.fdiworldental.org/en/node/109.

The world is changing and FDI helps us to understand this change at international or global level. For example, amalgam is prime issue. FDI can represent this at the world level for the dental profession. Another example is GCI and how it fits together, there is serendipity—the strategy for dealing with mercury is a reduction in need for amalgam.

There is a huge opportunity to

Spotlight on World Dental Development Fund

(Photoc/FDI WDDF)
FDI Revisits Suntec Center, Singapore

Eight months after the successful 2009 FDI Annual World Dental Congress at the Suntec International Convention and Exhibition Centre, Singapore, FDI returned to Singapore to participate in the biennial International Dental Exhibition and Meeting (IDEM) that took place from 16 to 18 April 2010.

Dr Roberto Vianna, FDI President, was present at IDEM Singapore to promote FDI and to extend FDI’s spirit of partnership among participating stakeholders.

“IDEM Singapore brings together many facets of FDI’s work towards improving oral and general health. Together with the Singapore Dental Association, FDI develops outstanding Continuing Education programmes—based on relevant and timely topics for the profession—which not only play an important role in the development of dentistry and dental professionals, but also in advocating the importance of oral healthcare to the population,” said Dr Vianna at the IDEM opening ceremony.

Organised by Koelnmesse and the Singapore Dental Association (SDA), in cooperation with FDI World Dental Federation, the 2010 edition of IDEM Singapore delivered cutting-edge insights into the very latest in dental technology, techniques and patient treatment.

The 2010 Scientific Conference at IDEM Singapore, which featured 18 international thought leaders in their respective fields, brought to the fore new protocols in patient treatment. Moreover, the most recent innovations that help dentists minimize the risks involved in advanced procedures, while maximizing the results for patients, were showcased by 352 exhibitors from 51 countries.

Participants equally benefited from the Conference Education Forum, organized by the Singapore Dental Health Foundation, in conjunction with IDEM Singapore. The forum sought to update the public beyond the basic principles of good oral care, exploring topics such as the relative advantages and disadvantages of implants, what patients should ask their dentists about implants and the intriguing Teeth-in-an-hour. Participants went away with valuable insights into the challenges and limitations of dental implant procedures.

IDEM Singapore 2010 also saw the introduction of ‘Let’s Talk Business seminar’ in which participants deliberated on how they can leverage technology to transform the delivery of dental treatments.

Looking forward, the theme and speakers for IDEM 2012 Scientific conference have been chosen. IDEM 2012 will focus on ‘Advances and Controversies’. It will have the following personalities as keynote speakers: Dennis Tarnow from the Columbia School of Medicine, New York; and Dr Michel Magne and Dr Pascal Magne from the University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

Grand opening of FDI head office in Geneva

Friday, April 25, 2010 saw the official opening on the new FDI World Dental Federation head office and the start of a new chapter in FDI’s evolution. FDI secular habitat have been settling in to the new location since the move from Ferney-Voltaire, France, last September immediately following Congress.

The move from France to Switzerland reflects the diversity of FDI membership. Geneva is international crossroads with its multicultural population, in a country with four official languages, located in heart of Europe and well connected to rest of the world. Also significant is the fact that Geneva is a Capital of Health, with FDI neighbours including the World Health Organization, World Heart Federation, International Federation of Red Cross, and Medicins Sans Frontiers.

Furthermore the consolidation of FDI businesses under a single entity provides more simplified management and a favourable taxation environment.

Attending the ceremony were FDI Council members and staff, FDI members, corporate sponsors, partners and other NGO’s. Mr Stéphane Graher, Délégué au Service de la Promotion Economique du Canton de Genève, and Mr André Klopman, Chargé des ONG internationales, Canton de Genève, represented the Canton de Genève. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was performed by FDI President, Roberto Vianna; FDI Executive Director, David Alexander; and for the Canton de Genève, André Klopman. Guests enjoyed a brief tour of the office on the 5th floor having a sneak peak of FDI’s new “home” and FDI’s colourful windows.

The Grand Opening ceremony coincided with FDI Council meeting. Despite the Iceland volcanic ash incident which made traveling difficult, a good number of guests could still attend the ceremony.

However, some aspects of the event were postponed, such as the bid-ding for the 2015 congress. This has now been scheduled to take place in September in Salvador.

Excerpt from FDI President Roberto Vianna’s speech

“I feel proud that FDI World Dental Federation—one of the world’s oldest international health profession organizations—has found a new home in this city, with neighbours including the World Health Organization, United Nations, and World Trade Organization.”

“From our new home in Geneva, we are well positioned to collaborate with our many partners in health, continuing to serve as the worldwide, unified voice for oral health; to promote oral health globally; and to deliver excellence in continuing professional education and access to care to communities worldwide.”

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[Photo/FDI WDDF]