A fitting tribute

Dental Tribune reports from the John McLean Symposium

More than 275 people came together at the Royal Society of Medicine to celebrate the life of John McLean, who passed away in June 2009. In a symposium arranged in his honour by David Winkler, 25 speakers from around the world came together to share stories and research into dental materials.

It was not a sad event, rather a celebratory time. All the speakers were clearly proud of their association with McLean, reverential of his contribution to dentistry but amused by his foibles. A striking fact was that every one of the speakers paid their own travel and accommodation expenses for the event and received no honorarium for speaking.

The delegates were greeted by a filmed oration by Graham Mount from Adelaide, Australia, who outlined some of the honours conferred on McLean during his lifetime.

Following this was a packed line-up of speakers, each being allotted a 15-minute slot for their presentation. The line-up included:

- Edwina Kidd - Caries and John. Eponymous lectures on caries mark the beginning and end of Edwina’s 55-year friendship with McLean and in her talk she looked at how the caries process can be controlled.
- Dr Avijit Banerjee - Modern Caries Management. He talked about the benefits of Minimal Intervention Dentistry – appropriate control measures to prevent new lesions and the operative management of cavitated lesions, minimal caries excavation and restoration.
- Ivar Mjor - Practice-based Dental Research. This was a brief overview of practice-based research related to restorative dentistry, because about two thirds of general dental practice involves diagnosis and prevention of caries, and the restoration of curiously defects.
- Alan Wilson - The Early Days with John McLean. Dr Wilson’s principal research interests were the dental silicate cement and other dental cements, the invention and development of the Glass Ionomer, the devising of test methods for dental materials and sustained delivery devices.
- Denis Smith - The Genesis of Adhesives for Enamel and Dentin. He gave an overview of the research and development of a number of pioneering individuals – including McLean – over 60 years who contributed to the composite systems of today.

Oswald Gaser - In Every Cloud there is a Kete/Silver Lining: Developing Dental Ceramics with John McLean. He reported on his personal experience of innovative, inventive and inspiring collaboration with McLean – in the creation of a self-adhesive, monomer-free dental material overcoming drawbacks of the then existing self-adhesive solutions.

Rainer Guggenberger - Glass Ionomers: Leading the Way to Self-Adhesive Materials. He argued that without glass ionomers – pioneered by McLean and Alan Wilson – self-adhesive composites would never have been developed.

Dr Raymond L. Bertolotti - The Quest for the Perfect Bond. He showed that judging bonds by shear bond strength tests on flat, 600 grit ground surfaces could be considered "shear nonsense".

Harold Preiskel - Clinical Science Meets Practice: Interface or Interference. He gave a synthesis of McLean's contribution to clinical dental science viewed through the eyes of an observer whose relationship matured from student to colleague and close friend.

Dr Richard Simonsen - Composites vs. Caries: The Ethics of Esthetic and Restorative Dentistry. In his talk, he discussed the recent trend towards creating the perfect ‘smile’ and looked at the ethical responsibility of the profession towards patient treatment.

Galip Gurel - Interdisciplinary Team Approach for Minimum Invasive Aesthetic Prepless Veneer: He stressed that clinicians must be ethical in patient care ensuring treatment is minimally invasive.

Ken Malament - Integration of Esthetic Dentistry in Routine and Complex Prosthodontics. His talk gave a look at failure modes faced by the dental technician when using dental photography – shade matching, midline orientation and incisal edge position.

Dr Stefan Paul - Tissue Integration of Implants: Biodynamics of External vs. Internal Design. He explored the latest literature and clinical cases to test the hypothesis if delayed implant placement can still be considered the standard of care in the maxillary anterior zone.

Nicolas Pietrobon - Digital Fabrication Processes. This discussed the use of computer guided surgery for precise and minimally invasive implant placement and examined some of the factors which may introduce error into the workflow.

Dr Balwin Marchack - Eight Years of Zirconia: A Clinician’s Retrospective Perspective. The presentation discussed the clinical performance of CAD/CAM zirconia restorations for natural teeth and implants in one private practice over an eight-year period and looked at current trends and future perspectives of this technology.

Naoki Aiba - Denticap: Dental Photography for Dentist-Laboratory Communication. He presented three major aesthetic challenges faced by the dental technician when using dental photography – shade matching, midline orientation and incisal edge position.

Dr Denis Smith - The Genesis of Adhesives for Enamel and Dentin. He gave an overview of the research and development of a number of pioneering individuals – including McLean – over 60 years who contributed to the composite systems of today.

For me this symposium was an excellent event, a fitting tribute to a dental pioneer and I wish the Fellowship Fund every success.