30 Years of Charity and Education

The AOG is Britain's under-rated dental organisation. Its recent holding of a joint conference of formal lectures and workshops with the Faculty of General Dental Practice (UK) and the Indian Dental Association in Delhi in February 2012, and an attendance of around 800 dentists to the 2011 Clinical Innovations conference in May, were visible indications of the high esteem in which it is held internationally. The activities of the group, however, are not restricted to weighty professional issues; its social events are also a chance for guests to meet friends old and new, and contribute to AOG's charitable work.

A recent focus of the philanthropic aspect of the AOG is its support of the Chitrakoot Project charity, named after the region in central India where the Project gives primary dental care to children and the poorest families in around 500 villages across the area. Treating over 40,000 cases of dental problems, in addition to oral cancers or cleft palates, and carrying out cosmetic work such as prosthetic rhinoplasties are just some of the procedures carried out by volunteers, whose assistance can save lives in many cases.

As well as delivering vital and sometimes life-saving oral care to people unfortunate enough to have no other access to dental professionals, this worthy venture is also valuable experience for some of the AOG's younger members who want to gain a familiarity of operating in a remote area of the world where access to dentistry can be limited.

Next year's project, in February, is linked with the CIC international conference in Capetown and the long standing association in Musoma, Tanzania. Members and friends depart during Easter mid-term for Kilimanjaro to open a new facility for disabled people in Musoma which is just 50 miles from the Serengeti Safari park. Those on a shorter vacation return to UK whilst the rest amble through South Africa, tasting the splendid New World wines and ending in Capetown where the AOG/Smile-on Clinical Innovations conference is being held between the 23rd and 25th of February 2012. Charity, fun and education are the themes of any international tour.

Not for nothing is the organisation's motto 'towards the greater good.' Naturally, a large number of the AOG's members wish to 'give something back' and perform good works with the destitute of the third world, which many of them have a strong connection to either through being born there or having relatives there.

A similar charitable spirit is embodied in the AOG's social events, the proceeds from all of which go to worthy causes. Over £90,000 was raised in one campaign that also kicked started the Chitrakoot project, whilst over £100,000 was raised in one night after the Japanese tsunami earlier this year. The dental trade also enthusiastically supports the AOG, due to its members having personal as well as professional bonds can be made between them, their spouses and their children. The school, which is a venerable institution situated in attractive parkland, is located in Elstree in Herfordshire. Whilst in the South-East region of the country, the venue's proximity to the M1 makes it relatively accessible to members from all over the UK.

The Summer BBQ & Family Day also includes live music, team games for all the family (rounders, in this year's case), alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks and a range of different spicy barbeque food. The event usually features a variety of different entertainments for children, such as a 'buckling bronco,' a bouncy castle, and a petting zoo. The great and good of dentistry tend to gravitate there with shorts, T-shirts and flip flops. Those who book tickets in advance online can save themselves money with a lower entry fee.

Since its formation in 1981, the AOG has grown to become one of the largest dental community groups in the UK. As well as its aforementioned charity projects, the AOG has alliances with other bodies in Britain and abroad that allow it to provide financial and educational help and guidance to its members; this comes in the shape of a free newsletter and a variety of discounts on educational courses and dental materials and consumables (primarily, a 16.5% reduction on products and services from the Dental Directory). The AOG will be 'Dentalghar's' UK social networking hub.

To learn more about the AOG, or to join, go to www.aoguk.org.

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