Dear friends and colleagues,

What a great honour to have this opportunity to share over half a century of my private practice experience with all of you! My prayer, since the beginning of my dental career, was to know when it was time to put the handpiece down. In December 2011, I finished a treatment with an excellent result, but it took me twice as much time and effort to do it. I realised then that my hand–eye co-ordination was not what it used to be. That was not fair to me, nor to the patient, so I decided that the time had come. I may have put the handpiece down, but I have replaced it with a pen, and I am eager to share some of my sincere convictions and experiences with you, in the hope that your path to excellence can be made smoother and with more commitment.

I believe what I heard so long ago: “In any profession, or walk of life, there are 2 per cent masters. They are put on earth, by God, to show how the task is to be done. Then there are 8 per cent who have a ‘God-given gift’ for what they do. They are honest, conscientious, hardworking and continuous students. Then there are 36 per cent who have an average, or so, ability. They too are honest, conscientious, hardworking and continuous students. But then there are the remaining 54 per cent who ‘don’t give a damn!’ They are doing what they are doing for all the wrong reasons: be it family pressure, peer pressure, money, recognition, power, etc., but not committed to their everyday task in life. It really does not make any difference what the person’s task in life (job) is. He or she could be a plumber, a barber or a dentist.”

Continuing education permits us to view achievements of the past, appreciate the current potential of patient care, and create a more predictable treatment result in the future. It is essential to seek out and listen to those who have already experienced the incredible and increasingly rapid advancement of technology that has occurred in recent years. We all stand on the shoulders of the giants who preceded us. Today, the range of and convenient access to communication permit anyone to attain current knowledge, to pave a path for better results. Continuing education is the map for our journey to excellence and provides the fuel necessary to get there. If you embrace the concept of continuing education as essential to performing your task in life at a higher level, this issue of roots is just another small channel for achievement.

In the pursuit of perfection, be willing to accept excellence. Look at any failures as lessons for improvement, not failures. In today’s wonderful world of technology and communication, it is all there for the taking, if you want it!

Dr John J. Stropko