

Features Section

Editorial

Moving On

'Times they are a-changing'

Bob Dylan, 1941-

Where did five years go? I can't believe that my time in charge of the journal has passed so quickly and that this is the last editorial I shall be writing as the Editor.

As many will know already Professor Kevin O'Brien was appointed as my successor a couple of months ago with the 'handover' due for completion in early 2001. His first complete issue as Editor will be in June 2001. I would like to start this piece by wishing him well in his new post, if he has half of the enjoyment and sense of fulfilment that I have had from this job, then he will be a lucky man!

In his last editorial before handing over the editorial office to me in December 1995, Ray Edler also offered his good wishes and advised me that the trick was to keep all the 'saucers spinning'. Perhaps, after five years of experience in the job, I now know what he means—certainly it is a balancing act at a variety of different levels most of the time! The most difficult thing to achieve, I believe, is the

balance of material in the journal so that it is inclusive, with some items of interest for the majority of the readership. In other words something for everyone! To this end the editorial board has developed the concept of separate clinical, scientific and features sections in every issue, with a focus on regularly attracting high quality material in all of these areas.

Another part of the operation, where a different type of balancing act is required, is the role of the Editor acting as a 'go between' referees, sub editors and the authors, the latter group being those upon which so much depends. At times, achieving this balance can be hard and making editorial decisions on papers based on often conflicting expert opinion can be difficult and even, on occasions, lonely. As an author myself, and one who has always enjoyed writing papers and articles, I fully realise the sense of disappointment, and even occasionally outrage, at the rejection of a paper. It is important for all involved to be sensitive to this and I have made it a policy to write an individually and carefully worded letter with my decision on each and every paper I have received during my time in this job. Also, I have tried to educate all involved in the process to the supportive line that I have tried to follow, whilst broadening the expertise of the team that reviews and reports on submitted work. The intention has been not only to obtain as near as possible to a fair unbiased view, but also to generate some useful 'positive feedback' to be returned to our submitting authors. I can't promise that I have always achieved these aims, as evidenced by the occasional 'ritual pinning' of the editor to the nearest wall by a disaffected author during a national meeting! However, it has been an important objective that our authors should feel that the editorial board does care whilst understanding the enthusiasm, work, time and commitment that is necessary to produce a scientific paper. Perhaps I have stretched the analogy of saucer or plate balancing far enough? However, whilst I am on the subject of commitment I would like to take this opportunity of both acknowledging and thanking a number of people with whom I have worked over the last five years, I hope the readership will forgive this indulgence but I feel it important that these contributions should be acknowledged.

Firstly, let me start with the Editorial Board. As I said at my first meeting of the board I have always made it clear that this was going to be a 'working board'!

My Assistant Editors have been excellent and committed a significant amount of their time to this job over the last five years. Peter Durning has done wonders at developing the clinical section of this journal evidenced by the wide variety of excellent material now submitted from around the world, not just North America and Europe. Meanwhile, also on the local team, Richard Oliver developed an inno-



The Journal of Orthodontics Booth/Stand at Chicago WFO/AAO Conference, Spring 2000. "Thank you to all that have helped with, supported and submitted to the JO during my term as Editor". Malcolm Jones

vative format for the Reviews & Abstracts section from scratch—there is nothing quite like it in the orthodontic literature. This area is always much appreciated by our readership, particularly those who are specialist practitioners. He is arguably the most widely read orthodontist on the planet—again I realise the time and effort that is required in preparing each issue and am grateful. Nigel Hunt has worked at developing the supplements; his review of training programmes, I know, continues to be appreciated by potential orthodontists looking for postgraduate courses. Jonathan Sandy has developed the very informative Scientific Review Series over the last couple of years. This again has required a lot of effort to maintain the momentum but it has been worth it in terms of the unique research and educational material produced, which is regularly referred to by orthodontic postgraduate trainees around the world. Another busy Assistant Editor, Laura Mitchell, who looks after the Products & Practice Section, has been enthusiastic and utterly reliable—everybody else may miss a deadline (including only too often myself) but never Laura! For many years Rob Mordecai worked hard at producing a section particularly focussing on matters of interest to specialist practice; this editorial gives me the opportunity to formally note my thanks to him for his efforts.

With regard to the rest of what is now the Editorial Board Executive, Robert Newcombe, our chief statistical advisor, has kept us in line regarding the quality of data collection and statistical analysis in the submitted papers. An additional important contribution has been the annual review to the Editorial Board of the published scientific papers from the previous year. Although this has, at times, made us shift nervously in our seats whilst papers we have looked after and published are assessed—the process has always been helpful, the audit helping the board as it tries to maintain a consistent standard in this area. Recently he wisely encouraged us to adopt the CONSORT guidelines for clinical studies to be published in the JO.

John McCabe, Kevin O'Brien, Steve Richmond, Gunvor Semb and David Tidy complete the Executive. They are the scientific sub editors looking after their areas of particular expertise. All have made efforts beyond the call of duty and for that I am grateful, also for their wisdom, advice and constant assistance.

This editorial also provides the opportunity to thank the rest of the board, which is comprised of distinguished orthodontists, clinicians and researchers from around the world. Their advice and assistance has always been of enormous help as I have tried to develop the journal and this immense truly international resource will, I am sure be an important inheritance available to my successor.

May I ask the indulgence of the readership a little longer to also give my personal thanks to the people that have helped to physically put the journal together? During my term I have had two Editorial Assistants in the office, first Elaine O'Brien and then Sonja Brain both have been vital to the smooth running of the journal. At the publishers, Oxford University Press, Mandy Sketch, Senior Editor for Medical & Life Sciences Journals, has overseen the management of the publication process constantly being supportive of good ideas and discouraging my crazier ones! Finally, let me also thank Chris Bristow, the Production Editor for the journal, for his kindness and friendship—but

most of all, for his patience as he has nursed me through the last 21 issues. Believe me, there would have been many more errors and mistakes without him!

The last five years have seen very great changes within the speciality and it is no coincidence that the orthodontic press, which largely reflects and reports those developments, has seen rapid change itself. In the current journal you will find an important report from the first meeting of the Forum of Orthodontic Editors. This meeting was held early this year in Chicago during the World Federation of Orthodontists/American Association of Orthodontists Conference. The day was stimulating, but also comforting to the editors present, in the recognition and discussion of so many areas of common concern within orthodontic publishing. I am sure that the proposed development of a web based network for sharing information between editors will be of great assistance to all participating national and international journals. Such a conduit, regularly used, could help resolve many of the issues of mutual concern identified within the forum. It is planned that this meeting of editors will be an annual event and I am sure that the Journal of Orthodontics will play its part in the future in this important initiative. The WFO/AAO meeting also saw the official launch of the rebadged version of this journal and it was particularly reassuring that many of the items featured within the first issue of the JO, for example Clinical Effectiveness, CONSORT guidelines and Systematic Reviews, were important items on the agenda of the working groups at the forum.

The meeting in Chicago was a great shop window for the journal where the 'journal's booth' did a 'roaring trade' and, as Editor, I had the opportunity to get feedback from the many readers from around the world—an experience that, for the most part, was enjoyable. The figure included with this editorial shows the booth in Chicago but is also included to show those of you, who didn't know already, the person you have been dealing with these last five years!

I hope that our publication has succeeded in its aim of being seen as a progressive and innovative journal reacting to, but also leading opinion within the speciality. The last few years have seen a change in format, content, presentation and, importantly, in the title. I leave this job pleased with what has been achieved so far and I believe the journal to be appropriately positioned and ready to move on to meet the many challenges that will face my successor. I have great faith that the Journal of Orthodontics will move on, continuing to go from strength to strength, and I have a similar faith that Kevin O'Brien will be the one to lead the charge! For those that might feel that things have changed too fast in our journal in recent years please remember in the competitive world of publishing those that stand still are, in effect, going backwards, the analogy is submerging deciduous molars! Your editor will continue to need all the support he can get!

I promise you all that this will not be the last you will hear from me in the JO. As I go back to the ranks of a submitting author, I may even trouble you with a guest editorial from time to time but only if asked and after a decent interval—of course! Good luck to the JO and farewell!

Professor Malcolm Jones
Editor in Chief
Journal of Orthodontics