



Dentists in a Bubble

As we sit in our offices, surrounded by our staff and patients, it is sometimes easy to lose perspective on the world around us. The pediatric dental office, not unlike our homes and communities, often becomes a little world unto itself. While this may make us feel secure, it is important to break out of the shell once in a while, if only for a little fresh air.

Many of us find the professional equivalent of that "fresh air" at local or national meetings where we can gather with friends and colleagues to share the knowledge and experience we have gained caring for our young patients. We broaden our professional horizons with these interactions, and return to our offices refreshed and invigorated with the sense that we truly are not alone in the challenges we face as pediatric dentists, and excited to try a new approach, technique or material.

How far does this analogy go? Some of us never break out of the home-to-office back-home-again routine. Some rarely open a journal, and haven't a clue what's happened since dental school. Others are deeply involved in teaching, research or organized dentistry with a strong sense of social purpose and commitment. Most of us are somewhere in the middle, trying to strike that elusive balance between career and family; trying to do our very best for all those who rely on us: our children, spouses, parents, patients and staff. A daunting task! Each

of us struggles to find our own balance to this critical equation.

Despite technological breakthroughs such as the Internet, life offers precious few opportunities for us to break out of the cocoons we weave around our lives, and we tend to take advantage of few of these. But there is a great big world of dentistry outside of our offices, and it extends far beyond the borders of our home towns, states, and even our own country. Many of us are unaware of the multinational origins of the materials and techniques that constitute the standard of care in modern pediatric dentistry. The enormous contributions of our colleagues in Scandinavia, Europe, Japan, and Israel in the areas of adhesives, restoratives, and orthodontics should not be ignored. Indeed, the breakthrough work in these areas began, and to a large extent continues, beyond the borders of the United States. Yet most of us have never even considered attending an international meeting of pediatric dentists.

In September of 1997 the International Association of Paediatric Dentistry (IAPD) held its 16th Congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Held in the beautiful South American spring in one of the world's most magnificent cities, the program featured hundreds of state-of-the-art presentations from around the world and legendary Argentinean hospitality. This incredible meeting was attended by over 1,200 pediatric dentists

from 35 countries. Barely two dozen participants came from the United States.

This year the 17th Congress of the IAPD will be held in London, England from 2-4 September. The venue is the elegant Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, located directly across from Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament. Our hosts, the British Society of Paediatric Dentistry, have planned a broad and exciting scientific program with world-class social events for international visitors. This is an event that will be easily accessible for American visitors, with safe, simple, and affordable travel arrangements, a variety of excellent, comfortable accommodations and wonderful English hospitality. Those who attend will undoubtedly want to register for the 18th IAPD Congress to be held in Paris in 2001 which will prepare us for 2003, when the world will be at our doorstep for the IAPD's 19th Congress in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Never has there been a better time to break out of the bubble and see the world!

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