



Endodontics in the age of apps and social media



Do you already enjoy navigating your torque-limited handpiece for mechanical root canal preparation using special apps? Is your electronic apex locator connected via Bluetooth with your smartphone or tablet yet? The spirit of the times has already found its way into endodontics – stay online and connected, even while treating root canals! Albeit, does this modern communication technology contribute to any improvements of endodontic treatment procedures? Is the use of apps associated with increased success rates? Certainly not! It seems that in daily practice, breaking new grounds is assumed to be the key to commercial success and improved reputation.

It goes without saying that immediately after completion of complex endodontic treatments, the most impressive radiographs must be posted in endodontic blogs. It is noteworthy how many radiographs of impressive root canal fillings are currently posted, commented and liked on Facebook. It is the era of aesthetic endodontics these days. Nothing wrong with that, but I am concerned about the trend that social media will increasingly supplant reputable text books, peer-reviewed journals or high-quality postgraduate education. A specific question about an endodontic diagnosis, treatment concept or whatever is rapidly and easily posted in blogs or via Facebook, resulting in an amusing potpourri of replies, suggestions, instructions and in some cases even more than bizarre executions of a personal favourite treatment approach. Often these personal opinions on how to treat or solve the particular case are supported by links to YouTube videos – colourful pictures embedded in the sonorous voice of a commenta-

tor explaining even the most complex procedures in mostly less than 5 minutes.

Scientific questioning in the age of social media and Wikipedia is a very delicate balancing act between collective intelligence – the so-called wisdom of crowd or swarm intelligence – and the re-emergence of the principle of eminence-based endodontics and the surrender of evidence-based treatment concepts. It should be borne in mind that when – like in blogs and social media – the answers to specific questions or problems are visible to all succeeding annotators, there is a very narrow ridge between wisdom of crowd and 'swarm ignorance'¹. It is a worrying trend that the value of printed matter decreases continuously – not to mention literature that is older than 10 or 15 years. However, our current understand of the principles of endodontics is based on the 'all-time classic' studies published in the early 1960s to 1980s. Therefore, I am more than happy that Professor Jim Gutmann has taken over the task of preparing a special issue of *ENDO-Endodontic Practice Today* on the Pioneers in Endodontics, which will be published later this year. Certainly, it will be a pleasure looking back to the roots of modern endodontics.

Thus, summarising my concerns, it is comforting that you are currently holding the actual issue of *ENDO-Endodontic Practice Today* in your hands. We should not give up evidence-based information sources, such as peer-reviewed articles, as published in this journal. Studying relevant journals and textbooks is, in my opinion, still the most reliable way to stay up-to-date. From time to time, it is even interesting to flip through older journals and textbooks to look back at the evolution of currently recom-

mended treatment concepts. This is a comfortable way of gaining a profound knowledge of the sciences of endodontics – much better than restricting this to simple 140-character text messages!



Edgar Schäfer

■ Reference

1. Lorenz J, Rauhut H, Schweitzer F, Helbing D. How social influence can undermine the wisdom of crowd effect. PNAS 2011;108:9020–9025.

