

# Editorial

## It just makes sense

It seems incongruous, at best, that the tooth nomenclature system that is the simplest, the easiest to learn, and the most adaptable to digital data is not in universal use. As our world shrinks, our profession requires a uniform system of tooth annotation. As the excellent article by Türp and Alt proposes in this issue, the new global system should be the so-called FDI system as described by Viohl.

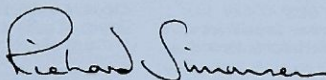
I recall in 4 years of dental school at the University of Minnesota trying to unsuccessfully make a number from 1 to 32 become instantly linked in my mind with a specific tooth—the so-called Universal system. Let's see. Mandibular left second premolar—that's 16 plus 4—I think. Simple, I was told. Uh, sure. I suppose it is a simple system, but it lacks uniformity, and it never really seemed easy and certainly not systematic to me.

In 2 years of practice in Norway after dental school I tried to adapt to the Zsigmondy, or Palmer, system, which was in use where I was working. Shortly thereafter, sometime in the early 1970s, I was introduced to the system commonly referred to as the FDI system. I felt relieved. Finally, after many years of working with systems that never met all the criteria I would like in a tooth-numbering system, I had found a system that made sense to me. I have maintained use of the FDI system these past 20 years or more. It just makes sense. We have used the FDI system as *QI's* official tooth annotation system since I became Editor in 1984.

As Türp and Alt report, the FDI system is endorsed by the World Health Organization and the Fédération Dentaire Internationale, and it is used by the International Standards Organization and Interpol. What more do we need? Perhaps some enlightened leaders willing to subjugate their organization's personal preferences for the benefit of the profession on a global basis would help.

It seems as if every organization, university, governmental program, or national dental society in each of our countries is of the opinion that *their* system is best. But it is time to think globally—what is best for the global profession of dentistry, and what is best for the patients we treat? Which system is most likely to avoid confusion and be most easily adapted to use in computer systems and across different cultures and countries? The answer is clearly stated and well-supported in the article of Türp and Alt.

The FDI tooth-numbering system needs to be accepted as the global standard tooth annotation system in dentistry. It just makes sense.



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