

## Defining Prosthodontics

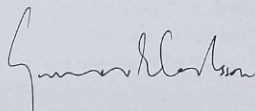
In a recent IJP editorial (March/April 1998), I presented some reflections on the current scope and content of prosthodontic research. My thoughts were based on, among other things, oral and poster presentations given at the 1997 conference of the International College of Prosthodontists (ICP). The abstracts of those sessions showed great variation in the subjects chosen and the methods used. Studies in traditional prosthodontic treatment areas—complete, fixed, and removable partial dentures—were rare in contrast to those in emerging fields such as implants and new materials, and in related disciplines (such as occlusion, oral physiology, and temporomandibular disorders). One could conclude either that the scope of prosthodontic research is poorly defined or that the congress organizers were generous to include studies from a variety of related disciplines. At any rate, a wide individual and geographic variation in opinions on the content of prosthodontic research was evident. Readers were invited to participate in discussion of this issue.

As if in response to that invitation, the first article in this issue addresses the definition of prosthodontics. The authors, Drs Jokstad, Ørstavik, and Ramstad, bravely challenge existing definitions and propose a new one. They particularly question the usual emphasis on the technical aspects of the discipline, and suggest that more attention should be given to the consequences of loss of teeth and adjacent structures as well as to the treatment itself and its outcomes. The article also critically examines several terms often used in defining prosthodontics, such as "implant" and "rehabilitation," and questions whether maxillofacial prosthetics should be included in the discipline.

The article is thought-provoking. It raises for consideration not only semantic points, but serious questions on the content of the discipline. Both the

organization of the specialty in academia, dental care institutions, and dental praxis, and the design of the ever-changing dental curricula will benefit from a deeper discussion of the issues raised in the article. Some prosthodontists probably will not agree with all the authors' statements. Nonetheless, it is hoped that the publication of this paper will raise the dormant issue of the definition, scope, and content of prosthodontics to the level of active discussion. The IJP would welcome further discussion of this issue, eg, in the form of contributions to the Correspondence section (letters to the editor).

With all due respect to the scientific papers in this issue, as always the core of the journal, I wish to comment on the article in the special ICP section. The publication of the history of the ICP, written by Dr Harold Preiskel, reflects the positive relationship that the ICP shares with the publisher of the IJP, Quintessence Publishing Co, Inc. The contract that is just being signed confirms the status of the IJP as the official journal of the ICP and secures a regular section in the journal for ICP material. The ICP history is first and foremost a courtesy to ICP members, but it is also likely to be of value to others interested in prosthodontics. Knowledge of the ideas behind the establishment of an international prosthodontic organization and the various phases of its development will assist in the staging of the future evolution of the specialty on a global scale.



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