



On Fifty-Plus Shades of Graying Patients and Their Needs for Special Dentists

The desire to look young is nothing new. Dental professionals have routinely used their talents to create and expand the cosmetic industry, as well as overcome past mishaps associated with surgical interventions and provision of ear-to-ear porcelain crowns. Older techniques have been eclipsed by more nuanced and readily acceptable procedures, and reality TV has demystified the process. A recent article in *Time Magazine* observed that cosmetic procedures are now cheaper, payment plans contribute to their ready availability, and numerous health professionals have turned their offices into high-tech beauty salons to fix cash flow problems. It appears that our culture has become much more narcissistic and that we pursue a sustained youthful appearance as if it were some sort of moral imperative.

"I look young, but am actually quite old," pronounced World Health Organization Director-General Margaret Chan in March 2015 at the first Ministerial Conference on Global Action Against Dementia. She then proceeded to describe her own desire to grow old gracefully and with dignity, contrasting her own aspirations with the plight of 47 million people worldwide who struggle to cope with the debilitating effects of dementia, a disorder that is expected to double in prevalence over the next two decades. This alarming statistic, combined with equally poignant predictions regarding the risk

of frailty in old age, is a stark reminder of the disconnect that confronts the dental profession's evolving spectrum of treatment choices and associated social responsibilities, especially when managing the needs of elderly patients. Numerous experienced clinical educators from our global constituency readily acknowledge that this patient cohort's needs are not necessarily the remit of specialists but of special dentists. The latter constituency needs to be informed and nurtured to deal with the enormity of the clinical challenge, and preferably guided by the prosthodontic discipline.

Michael MacEntee has been an eloquent and committed advocate for raising dentistry's consciousness on current and future challenges in geriatric dentistry. His numerous contributions to health care literature, especially his text *Oral Healthcare and the Frail Elder: A Clinical Perspective*, have already profoundly enriched the dental canon. His emphasis on reconciling clinical judgment with humanitarian concerns underscores what is most noble in our health care mission. He agreed to provide a guest commentary as well as the abstracts from the September 2015 International College of Prosthodontists Meeting's special session in Seoul.

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