

JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF DENTISTS



SEPTEMBER 1961

Volume 28 • Number 3

JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF DENTISTS

Volume 28, Number 3—September, 1961



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The Journal of the American College of Dentists is published quarterly—in March, June, September, and December—by the American College of Dentists at 1201-05 Bluff Street, Fulton, Missouri • Subscription \$7.50 a year; single copies \$2.00 • Second class postage paid at Fulton, Missouri • Copyright 1961 by the American College of Dentists.

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1961 CONVOCATION
October 15, Philadelphia
Bellevue Stratford Hotel

Dentistry and Its Future

GERALD H. LEATHERMAN, D.M.D., F.D.S.R.C.S.

Numerous articles and lectures are being published in our dental journals on dentistry and its future, and in the national press and magazines of various countries on dentistry as a health service. It is becoming increasingly obvious that dentistry has come to a cross-roads in the paths of its progress as a health profession and, with this in mind, I posed six questions in my report as Secretary General of the Federation Dentaire Internationale to the General Assembly of the Federation at its annual meeting in Dublin, June, 1960. The delegates present felt that the questions were worthy of discussion at special sessions of the General Assembly in Helsinki next year and Cologne the year after.

I have asked about 70 colleagues in various countries for their personal replies to the six questions, and after studying their answers I am more than ever convinced that the dental profession in every country must consider whether its system of education and its organization as a profession is adapted to the present and future demands likely to be made upon it as a health service.

As so much has already been written about this, few original thoughts can be put forward. I shall therefore give you my personal views which are based on a fairly broad knowledge of international dental organization and practice, and indicate the line of thought and action which I believe those responsible for dental health the world over should follow.

To predict the future of a profession it is well to consider its evolution. Dr. M. M. Chaves,¹ Regional Adviser in Dental Public Health to the World Health Organization, has identified five evolutionary stages, each with its own particular type of practice. They are briefly as follows. In the first stage of *undifferentiated occupation* any treatment is given by lay persons as a secondary occupation; folk medicines and extractions are the only remedies for dental diseases, and

Presented at the Autumn Meeting of the Anglo-Continental Dental Society in London, October 29, 1960.

Dr. Leatherman is Secretary General of the Federation Dentaire Internationale.