



2011

International College of Dentists

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“Recognizing Service and the Opportunity to Serve”

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IT SEEMS TO ME...a note from International President Charles Siroky

Phoenix, Arizona, USA 8.1.11

HUMANITARIANISM AND THE ICD

Some time ago it occurred to me that the focus of the ICD was gradually shifting from the “dissemination of dental knowledge”, one of the principal goals of our founding objectives, to “humanitarianism.” I imagine that this is due in great part to readily available continuing education - electronically, on audiocassette, DVD, and online. These methods of transmitting educational material were not available when the College’s original goals were visualized.

It is a natural progression, for the dissemination of knowledge and humanitarianism is more closely related than it may seem at first blush. A *humanitarian* is a person concerned with improving the welfare of mankind, whereas teachers, through the *dissemination of knowledge* have the power to improve the lives of great numbers through their students. As a great number of ICD Fellows were invited to Fellowship specifically because of their humanitarian efforts, it’s only natural that, as a group, the ICD has been drawn in that direction. And, as an international organization, it may be easier for us to see the need and the opportunity of serving mankind while bringing meaning and purpose to our own lives.

The motivation for providing humanitarian relief can be complex but always speaks to the loftiest qualities of human nature. Some of these motives may seem even selfish when considered independently. However, the rewards a volunteer enjoys do not exist in a vacuum, but rather are brought into being only as a result of participating in a humanitarian effort. And they are unique to us as human beings. Other species do not seem aroused by these considerations.

- *Humanitarian efforts make one a better and more compassionate practitioner.* The opportunity of service often exposes the provider to a range of pathology or trauma rarely observed in the typical dental practice. This hands-on experience affords training impossible to obtain from a textbook. And the intimate observation of suffering prompts the natural desire to provide relief.

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Mission Statement

The International College of Dentists is a leading honorary dental organization dedicated to the recognition of outstanding professional achievement and meritorious service and the continued progress of the profession of dentistry for the benefit of all humankind.

- *You always get more than you give.* Patients may walk several miles to receive care at an outreach clinic in a remote mountain village. It may be their only access to dental care. They are very thankful and extremely appreciative. They have had infection treated or pain alleviated. They can once again give full attention to the routine of their lives. But the participation in a humanitarian effort by a volunteer practitioner is frequently described as a “life changing” experience. The feelings of satisfaction, dignity, worth, and fulfillment have an endorphin-like quality. The reward of provider is always much greater than that of the patient.
- *The friends a volunteer makes along the way can be the greatest reward for service to humanity.* When a person participates in a humanitarian effort, whether it is close to home or in a faraway land, he or she frequently meets people who, although having similar altruistic tendencies, come from different occupational or cultural backgrounds. These new acquaintances often have unique insights and introduce new areas of interest. This camaraderie can be a source of great happiness.

The International College of Dentists is a primary sponsor, or a significant participant, in many humanitarian efforts around the world. Virtually all of our fourteen autonomous Sections support one or more humanitarian endeavors. In a recent survey of ICD projects we determined that sixty-four percent of them were of a humanitarian nature.

Although I cannot go into any great detail about any one of these projects in this limited report, I can give some idea with regard to their scope and worldwide impact. For instance:

In **Kenya**, in the Kikuyu area near Nairobi, we have helped equip a dental clinic that is helping to provide services to a community of a half million people who did not previously have meaningful oral health care.

In **Tanzania** the ICD has helped provide dental care to approximately a hundred-and-seventy-five thousand displaced persons living in two refugee camps. The two donated dental operatories have made it possible for free service to be provided to those with serious dental needs. Prior to this, patients with serious dental problems had to be transported clear across the country to the capital of Dar es Salaam.

The dentist to population ratio in **Vietnam, Cambodia** and **Laos** is approximately one to between sixteen and seventeen thousand people. Partnering with other organizations, the ICD has helped establish a Masters program in dental public health in these Southeast Asian countries. Scores of dentists have been trained over the last several years.

Renal transplant patients have very specific oral deficiencies such as decrease in salivary flow, enamel hypoplasia and gingival hyperplasia associated with immunosuppressant drugs. The Kidney and Hypertension Hospital of the Federal University in Sao Paulo, **Brazil** has been the world leader in kidney transplants over the last ten years. Twenty ICD dentists and hospital volunteers participate in a program of prevention and oral health promotion three times a year.

There is a school in the village of Bhattedande in the foothills of **Nepal** which is helping overcome high levels of illiteracy. The school’s oral health program focuses on supervised school based tooth brushing with fluoride toothpaste and twice yearly dental camps conducted in the school providing preventive and restorative care. The ICD has also provided supplies for the program including toothbrushes and tubes of fluoridated toothpaste.

These are but a few examples of the humanitarian projects with which the ICD is involved around the globe. A compilation of Humanitarian, Educational, Leadership and other projects of the various autonomous Sections, *Project*

55, was recently completed and has been posted on our website: <http://www.icd.org/>. When you access the homepage, go to the top and click on Projects. *Project 55* will appear in the dropdown list.

These programs illustrate the scope and variety of humanitarian projects supported by you through the International College of Dentists. The ICD is proud of all Fellows who participate in its humanitarian and other programs. As the world's most respected honorary dental organization we are in a unique position to partner with and garner support for those projects and programs that have the greatest impact on improving the oral health of our fellow man. Please join with other ICD Fellows in participating in the projects of your area or support those in other Sections. We can never have too many volunteers.

THIS AND THAT... *Each International Councilor is a Section Ambassador. While they represent the Section that sends them, they are also represent the College at Large and should also look after the interests of every Fellow. Because we are a large International organization, each Councilor should exhibit a genuine interest in the College, be willing to travel and work diligently, and have good diplomacy and language skills.*