

Corona-Coaster

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“You have power over your mind- not outside events. Realize this and you will find strength” - Marcus Aurelius

Over the past 5 months the world changed in ways which we could never have anticipated. The idea that the dental profession would come to a standstill for weeks, never mind months, was incomprehensible. As a profession, we have experienced a range of emotions, in what some have termed a “Corona-coaster”. I must admit that at the beginning of lockdown I felt quite low. Most dentists are intense individuals. Some of the characteristics which define us as orthodontists, are that we like to help people, we are sociable, hardworking, controlling, and we strive for perfection. You might even venture to say we have a touch of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)! To find ourselves at home with little purpose, unable to serve the community in the way in which we are accustomed, has been a huge blow to us from many perspectives, including on an emotional and mental level. I found that I almost went through the stages of grief to come to terms with the reality of how Covid-19 was affecting our daily lives. When I did reach the stage of acceptance, and realised I had little control of the outside events, I did indeed find some renewed strength. In some ways, this has been a defining moment for the specialty, and fortunately I was able to harness my energy and use it to “propel” our profession and fellow orthodontic colleagues forward and make a significant contribution during these dark times.

For me personally, what started as a simple case discussion webinar to keep our minds off the Covid-19 escalation, blossomed into daily platform for prominent international speakers to present free orthodontic education to colleagues around the globe. There have been many contributors, and I cannot solely take credit for this endeavour. I need to pay tribute to many who have worked tirelessly in many spheres, such as organizing speakers and much background work in particular my best friend and colleague Dr Mark Wertheimer, a consultant orthodontist and past president of South African Orthodontic Society, as well as to the speakers who have availed themselves without expecting any remuneration. I also need to pay tribute to the families of those that have played a part, who have contended with allowing those involved the time to take part in this endeavour.

As time has gone on and the lockdowns extended, dental groups and organisations started their own virtual programmes, to keep morale up, replace cancelled conferences, and more recently, to update clinicians about the new Covid-19 related adjustments to future dental practice. It is important that we recognise the opportunities this forced “pause” in our professional/personal lives has given us. It has introduced us to different opinions and practices from colleagues around the world, we otherwise may have remained oblivious to.

It has also afforded us a chance to reflect and reassess on our values, goals and life direction. It has been a defining moment in modern history and we can only hope that we will be remembered for our positive contributions during this time to the orthodontic profession. From a professional perspective, there has been an opportunity to focus on evidence-based material, and it is my hope that orthodontic specialists will embrace this and apply it in practice going forward. It would appear that the specialty was perhaps losing its way in certain areas. It is my hope that there is a return to more traditional values in the future and that this may serve as a defining time for the rekindling of evidence-based orthodontic practice.

I hope all the readers of this journal have taken what they need from this time and can come off the “Corona-coaster” feeling energised and ready to tackle the post-Covid-19 era armed with a defined purpose and refined clinical practices.

