

## President's report AGM 2018

Well it's been fun.

Enoch Powell is reported to have concluded that all political lives end in failure. He used to be my MP, and then I turned 18. When he was asked why he lost the election he replied "because the other candidate got more votes than I did". I saw him lecture years later on "UK foreign policy towards Russia" and they had to move him to a bigger theatre because so many people turned up, then the lecture was delayed because the new venue had to have extreme security measures sorted out. Towards the end, he mentioned that he thought Germany would reunify soon. People who had risked their lives, and seen their friends lose theirs, were in the audience and they were incredulous and actually annoyed at him for suggesting such things. It was spring of 1989.

My time as president ends at this year's AGM. I think there was failure too on my part –there's a variety of things I didn't do that I would have liked to but the consolation is that the odds were against me and tomorrow is another day.

What did we achieve? An increase in members, our first meeting north of the border, our first meeting over 3 days, some very well-received new speakers, and a reach to delegates outside of Ireland. We supported Capetown's bid to host World Orthodontic Congress – and lost. The OSI was mentioned in newspapers and national radio. We got the Dental Council to conclude that mail order orthodontic treatment is probably a bad thing. Thanks to the efforts of our past president Sinead O'Hanrahan, we have put the wheels in motion for hosting a European Orthodontic Congress in the future, probably the middle of the next decade, and have set up a competition for post graduate students in memory of Seamus Keating.

I thank Aideen for her help in the day to day operations of the Society. Without her the OSI would be unrecognisable to us. I'm also grateful to the various people that have worn these chains ahead of me who have given me help and counsel at various times, and the current council who walk this journey with me. It's great that so many have been happy to serve for multiple terms in office.

I wish the best to Ronan Perry, the incoming president and all his successors, starting with Ciara Scott.

And for the society and specialty, I wish you all well. I think we can't be complacent about the future, never mind the future of dentistry. But it's mainly the future of dentistry that we need to be concerned with from now.

The future is already here, it just isn't evenly distributed.

Two years ago I was at an address to the American Association of Orthodontists during a seminar on the future of orthodontic business. It didn't go down well when the audience, concerned with the commercial threats to their businesses and the low morale of their specialty, were told that the future for orthodontists was positive. You could hear the murmurs and groans in the audience. The speaker told them that the demand for orthodontic treatment was the highest it had ever been and the potential market was enormous and ready for ortho treatment. But they would have to provide that treatment for \$2000.

And that went down a lot, lot worse.

That evening I ate with the Irish delegation – thanks to Myles from American Orthodontics for that by the way – and a previous president asked me about the seminar, and if I was optimistic about the future of the specialty and I replied that I was. In the two years since, I have reflected on that conversation many times. I have no idea why I felt optimistic then, and there was no rational or objective why I should have since. It may just be in my nature, but if the world around me shouldn't really give me cause to, then that could be dangerous. The challenges to the specialty here are, or will be, the same as those that our colleagues in the US have already faced and are still coming to terms with and still trying to find answers for.

The challenges are a combination of technology attempting to bypass the knowledge and experience that we have, the profession keen to adopt this model and in no hurry to recognise, develop or promote specialism in dentistry in Ireland, and a public that are indifferent to any of this – but they want straight teeth yesterday for a fraction of the cost or inconvenience associated with attending an orthodontist. And this plays out in an outside world of increasing regulation and business costs and Brexit-shaped disruption in an economy that might not be as positive as we're led to believe. The HSE, with its yet-to-be-demonstrated efforts for planning to deal with the retirement of orthodontic specialists will have its own problems.

The strategies for dealing with this are not certain, but probably not unknown or unimaginable. It's probable that it won't be the same strategy for each of us, and each of us may adopt more than one. Regardless of this there is strength in knowledge and strength in numbers, so I'd ask you to support the OSI in anyway you can, support each other, keep learning and don't renounce change.

And rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Stephen Murray

Orthodontic Society of Ireland

President 2016-2018