Editorial

The value of Case Reports

There is a steady stream of manuscripts concerning case reports and case series submitted to the European Archives of Paediatric Dentistry every year. Because our speciality is a clinical one and we each see many children every year with complex dental problems, so the publication of case reports is important to us. They provide us with new ideas or approaches to providing dental care for children with rare or complicated syndromes. They also notify us of new syndromes or clinical problems so enhancing the breadth of our knowledge.

However, over any one year many of the case reports submitted to the EAPD are repetitious and often only report that the author(s) have seen some children with an anomaly or a syndrome. The syndrome/case in particular may well be novel to the author(s) but oftentimes a brief search of the dental literature, through Pubmed, reveals that many of these reports concern cases that have already been published on the same subject many times before.

An example of this is that within the past five years our journal has received many papers on infra-occluded/submerged primary molars. Few of these have shown any new ideas as to the aetiology or perhaps more importantly better ways of dealing with the problem. Indeed, a search of the current dental literature shows over one hundred and twenty such papers. Submerged primary molars are not at all uncommon but nobody has yet come up with the perfect solution as to what is the best approach to treatment. Regrettably, these papers have to be rejected, sometimes to the consternation of the author(s) who are surprised when they are told that there is nothing new in the case report. Before preparing a case report it is very advisable to check the literature for previous publications.

Nevertheless, we do receive case reports that are of interest and worthwhile publishing. These papers either report a new syndrome, clinical presentation or a new approach to dental treatment. Sometimes the case report tells us about a condition of the past that we had all thought long disappeared but a new case(s) had occurred. These are of interest because they highlight the need to continually be aware of the rare condition long since dismissed.

As case reports are useful for clinical practice it has been the EAPD policy for some years to have an issue that groups together case reports that provide a collection of clinical interest. This issue is another one of these. Published herein is a new review of the aetiology of early childhood caries, an ever-changing area of interest and, four case reports. The latter include a paper on possible dental aspects of van Buren’s syndrome, not presently in the literature, and an interesting paper on Rutherford’s syndrome following several generations of an affected family. These should certainly be of interest to our members.

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