



Casey Hein

THE COBB FACTOR

By Casey Hein

What were the chances that a renegade dental hygienist could partner with an ultraconservative periodontist to launch a publication that would drive the transfer of oral-systemic medicine from research labs to everyday patient care? Most saw this unique partnership as a real long shot. But, in truth, the vision Charley Cobb and I had for progressive implementation of this evolving body of science was a match from the very beginning. Our vision, actualized in *Grand Rounds in Oral-Systemic Medicine™*, is now celebrating an unexpected level of success from its first year of publication. This is largely due to what I have come to endearingly refer to as “the Cobb Factor” — a synonym for Charley’s dedication to excellence in literature and steadfast commitment to evidence-based decision-making. Indeed, I credit “the Cobb Factor”, or Cobb — the curmudgeon of science — for the unparalleled success of *Grand Rounds*.

It was about 4 years ago when I began to routinely cite Charley’s various literature reviews and research findings in my articles and lectures. After a while, he decided it was time to meet face-to-face to find out whether I really understood oral-systemic medicine — or so Charley’s story goes. The first time I met Charley was in Oklahoma City in September 2004 during what has been called “The Oklahoma Project”; a venue endorsed by a group of forward thinking periodontists from Oklahoma who took a chance in inviting me to present several day-long programs designed to empower dental hygienists in progressive periodontal therapeutics. Charley decided this venue would be the perfect place to critique me. I had heard that “Cobb was coming” to Oklahoma City, but I was not quite expecting him to sit in the front row and scribble what seemed endless notes throughout my presentation. To say I was intimidated by Charley’s unabashed critique of my presentation is an understatement.

It was during this first introduction to Charley that I realized we shared a mutual vision for how oral-systemic medicine could

be integrated into mainstream health-care through medical-dental collaboration. In the months that followed our first meeting, Charley and I spent hours discussing our visions for the future of dentistry, and in the end we committed to work together to bring about the stuff we had only dreamed about. The change agent was the evolving body of science called oral-systemic medicine. Little did we know that our shared vision would take root and become actualized through *Grand Rounds*.

I think it’s fair to say that without Cobb, *Grand Rounds* would have been just a good idea, sitting on the shelf. At the time we envisioned the concept of *Grand Rounds*, Charley graciously accepted the position of Editor-at-Large; however, he insisted on 1 condition — that he would retire after the first 4 issues were published. And so, it is with this February



Chief Editor Casey Hein and Editor Emeritus Dr. Charles Cobb in Albuquerque, New Mexico, celebrating the first anniversary of *Grand Rounds in Oral-Systemic Medicine™*.

2007, first year anniversary issue that Charley has decided to transition from the position of the Editor-at-Large to the Editor Emeritus of *Grand Rounds in Oral-Systemic Medicine*[™]. Since “the Cobb Factor” is so vital to this publication, I am truly grateful that Charley has agreed to stay on. I cannot envision this publication without him.

Simultaneously, it gives me great pleasure to announce that Dr. Anthony Iacopino has accepted a new leadership role for *Grand Rounds*. Tony is a professor at Marquette University School of Dentistry and holds another academic post at the Health Policy Institute at the Medical College of Wisconsin. He is very well published, and the recipient of many professional awards. As Associate Editor of *Grand Rounds*, Tony brings depth and breadth of understanding relative to molecular and biological sciences, clear vision, high energy and already proven dedication to the journal. Tony’s contribution will be invaluable.

In celebrating the success of our first year of publication, I thank the dedicated members of our Advisory Board for their help and encouragement. In addition, I want to thank PennWell’s greatest advocates for *Grand Rounds* — Lyle Hoyt, Senior Vice President and Group Publisher, and Craig Dickson, Publisher, for their support during this past year of building.

With this anniversary issue of *Grand Rounds* comes significant expansion of editorial which includes the addition of a number of dedicated columns. “**The Oral Pathology-Systemic Symposia**,” anchored by Dr. James Sciubba, is dedicated to exploring the systemic implications of oral pathologies and novel diagnostic and treatment strategies. Sciubba is one of the most highly regarded oral pathologists in the world and the co-author of the most widely read textbook of oral pathology. His vision for this column, which is discussed on page 19, casts the study of oral pathology in a new perspective. I am also pleased to announce the beginning of a new column called “**Front Line Perspectives**”. This editorial will be anchored by various clinicians from “in the trenches” who have an important message to share about implementation of oral-systemic science. In the debut of this column, Dr. Bill Reeves, a private practice periodontist from Oklahoma City, has contributed a thought provoking commentary on what defines general dentists and dental hygienists who practice progressive periodontal therapeutics. I encourage dentists, dental hygienists, physicians or nurse clinicians who would like to contribute editorial for this commentary to contact me at caseyh@pennwell.com. Another addition to *Grand Rounds* is a column which provides a forum for dental directors from various companies within the insurance industry to weigh in on how their corporate policies are impacted by the emerging evidence of oral-systemic links. On page 41 of this issue, Dr. Mary Lee Conicella from Aetna

discusses research findings related to the effect periodontal treatment may have on the cost of medical care. Aetna is among the most progressive insurance companies — those that have selectively implemented credible evidence of oral-systemic links.

This issue of *Grand Rounds* has taken a different approach to the discussion of oral cancer. To stretch our readers’ thinking on the subject of oral cancer, we recruited various researchers from around the world who have studied oral cancer from different perspectives, offering intriguing yet controversial explanations of its pathogenesis. The contribution of Dr. Donna Mager, from Forsyth Institute in Boston, and her colleagues explore the potential to use certain oral bacteria to detect oral cancer and the possibility that certain oral species may contribute to carcinogenesis. Dr. Stefano Fedele from Eastman Dental Institute in London and his colleagues discuss the basis for the theory that chronic inflammation is an important factor in the pathogenesis of oral cancer. From the medical side, Dr. Patrick Ha, from Johns Hopkins Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, offers an original article which provides great technical insight relative to the molecular/genetic basis of oral cancer. I am honored to have the contribution of such a gifted physician. To top off such excellent editorial, Diane McClure teams up with her dental hygiene and nursing colleagues to propose a model for dental-medical collaboration for the palliative care of patients suffering with complications from treatment of head and neck cancer. They offer a highly compelling proposal for collaborative care. I also want to thank Dr. William Lawson, our guest editor from the Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York, for his contribution. Last but not least, I am very grateful to Dr. Jim Sciubba for his willingness to act as academic anchor and his guidance of this important issue of *Grand Rounds*.

I hope what follows will stretch the thinking of our readers relative to new theories of the pathogenesis of oral cancer, and also provide a blueprint for collaboration among medical and dental providers for the optimal care of patients who are undergoing treatment for head and neck cancer. This first year anniversary would be incomplete without thanking our readership and asking for their feedback. To continue to build *Grand Rounds*, I wholeheartedly welcome your input and look forward to hearing from you.

Warmest personal regards,



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