

**LETTERS TO THE MJM****CONGRATULATIONS TO THE  
MJM FROM THE DEAN OF MEDICINE,  
MCGILL UNIVERSITY**

Dear *MJM*:

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to write and offer my congratulations to the Editorial Board on the completion of five volumes of the *McGill Journal of Medicine*. This undertaking has, in a very brief period of time, accomplished a great deal. The Journal has served as a forum for the dissemination of original work and scholarship by medical students, other health professional students and graduate students in the Faculty of Medicine. Furthermore, the Journal has now been formally indexed by *Index Medicus*, which will allow even greater accessibility to the general world of biomedical scholarship. Lastly, the Journal has provided an opportunity for young members of the Faculty of Medicine to hone their skills as scientific editors, reviewers and managers. These are enormous accomplishments in such a short period of time and all the members of the Faculty of Medicine are proud of your accomplishments.

With best regards,  
yours sincerely,

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**SURVIVING THE RAT RACE: THE GROWING  
PRESENCE OF MARKETING IN DENTAL AND  
OTHER HEALTH CARE INDUSTRIES**

Dear *MJM*:

Throughout the years, we have witnessed a change in the way that dentistry is practiced. While in the past the function of the dentist was to remedy toothaches and alleviate suffering, it has been estimated that today "more than 90 per cent of services provided by dentists are discretionary, which simply put, means that very few dental services are directly related to the elimination of pain and suffering" (1). Since only a small proportion of the dentist's work involves the alleviation of pain and discomfort, the majority of dental services may increasingly be viewed by consumers as optional.

Optional services are generally regarded as those that are non-essential to the health and welfare of individuals. The extent to which consumers regard dental services as being either essential or non-essential will greatly impact the viability, or at least the profitability, of the dental industry. Since consumers have a limited disposable income, they must make decisions regarding where to spend their money. This puts the dentist in a rat race not only against other dentists, but also against other businesses competing for the consumer's dollar.

Successful companies such as McDonalds, IKEA, and Microsoft have one thing in common: They are all pundits when it comes to the marketing of their products and services. What is marketing? Marketing is anything that connects the buyer and seller to a product or service. Marketing has the power to increase consumer interest, demand, product value, and market share. Once consumers perceive particular products or services as more valuable than others, they will place a higher priority on the purchase of those particular goods or services.

In order to survive in the marketplace, dentists have increasingly been making use of various marketing techniques such as advertisements (e.g. yellow pages, newspapers), promotional items (e.g. company-labeled toothbrushes), mail-outs (e.g. postcards, information bulletins), one-on-one marketing tactics, and websites.

Since the Canada Health Act (2) has promoted the existence of a publicly financed health care system, there are many areas in the health care industry that have enjoyed the benefit of full coverage under the Act and have not yet felt the necessity to enter the world of marketing. However, it is probable that with the growing trend towards the de-listing of services covered under Medicare, marketing will play an expanded role in the delivery of many health care services in the future.

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**REFERENCES**

1. Stockton HJ. Marketing is not a four-letter word: part I - ethical marketing of dental services. *Practice Management* May/June: 12-15; 1999.
2. S.C. 1984, c. 6.