



Oral Biosciences and Medicine – the Future

Dear readers,

Because dental research has for decades mainly concentrated on dental materials and technology, the general public and even medical professionals have perceived dentistry as a technical discipline focused on the repair of dental hard structure and replacement of lost teeth. This research has undoubtedly resulted in considerable progress in providing sophisticated high-tech dentistry. Another significant area of research has been the introduction of the principle of prevention and prophylaxis of dental caries and periodontal disease. This has led to a worldwide improvement in oral health with demonstrable decreases in the prevalence rates of these two diseases in many countries. The World Health Organization and the Fédération Dentaire Internationale have clearly recognized this trend by predicting that the scope of dentistry will change to a more biologically oriented discipline in the 21st century. The shift in perception has led these institutions to advocate a change to the description of the professionals that provide dental services: patients should no longer talk about the 'dentist' but about the 'oral physician'. In addition, a number of editorials (including one by Harald Löe) have pointed out that, in future, dentistry will to a large extent involve an amalgam of disciplines within oral biosciences. Accordingly dentistry may steadily evolve into what some faculties in Japan already tend to call 'biodentistry'.

Disciplines such as Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology and Oral Medicine that have hitherto focused on biological research are increasingly dependent on modern bioscientific research approaches involving sophisticated techniques from the fields of nanotechnology, molecular biology and molecular genetics.

Among other projects the Human Genome Project will have a considerable impact on the future of oral health and biology, and will probably also influence the treatment of patients – one possibility being the cloning of patients' own dental hard substances instead of using conventional dental filling materials. This futuristic approach may turn out to be one possible option of dental repair.

The aim of Oral Biosciences and Medicine is not the propagation of what some people call device driven research but research that is clearly focused on both healthy and diseased structural and functional molecular biology – including all structures of the stomatognathic system.

We anticipate Oral Biosciences and Medicine will become the forum for those in the international research community interested in the fields of clinical and experimental Biosciences and Oral Medicine, thereby providing a platform for translational research. Although this journal aims to communicate relevant and important research findings it will also provide clinical advice on the management of patients in terms of diagnosis and treatment. Teaching modules will also be included, thereby providing material for ongoing professional development.

Few doubt that biological research in oral health and disease is of ever increasing importance. Oral Biosciences and Medicine addresses the 'convinced', but also plans to 'convert' those that still harbour doubts.

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