

The Elephant

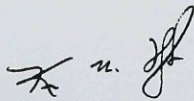
As I write this editorial, I am sitting in my hotel room in Vancouver, Canada. We have just completed an all-day symposium on orofacial pain. It focused on a forthcoming text on dental pain intended for students, residents, and practitioners organized by Drs Gilles Lavigne, James Lund, Ronald Dubner and Barry Sessle. The approach is unique: authors were invited to develop chapter overviews and then to present them for review and critique at this symposium, which was limited to about 200 individuals. The subject matter included taxonomy of pain (C. McNeill), epidemiology of pain (L. LeResche), mechanisms of pain (B. Matthews, B. Sessle, J. P. Lund, A. Woda, R. Dubner, W. Maixner, M. C. Bushnell, K. M. Hargreaves, G. Lavigne, and others), psychologic factors (S. Dworkin), pain measurement (P. Rainville), myalgia and arthralgia (C. S. Stohler), neuropathic pain (M. Max), odontalgia (R. Holland), differential diagnosis and educational/translational guidelines (J. P. Goulet, J. S. Feine, C. G. Widmer, C. S. Greene), pharmacology (R. A. Dionne), and other topics. Each review was followed by a discussion on how the topic could be best focused for the benefit of readers. The book, entitled *Orofacial Pain: From Basic Science to Clinical Management*, will be published by Quintessence early next year. Both the symposium and the subsequent text are dedicated to the memory of Professor Arthur Storey, whose career in many ways epitomized the strengths of the multidisciplinary scholar-clinician, and whose obituary is included in this issue of the journal.

Since I am a confessed "pain geek," I was surprised to realize how much I could learn from an all-day, broad-spectrum symposium. Although all of the talks were on orofacial pain, the sheer breadth of the topics covered was far greater than what I tend to see at regular

national meetings on pain. As the symposium wound down at the end of a long day, I began to wonder whether, in an attempt to increase our expertise in an ever-narrowing field, we have perhaps lost the value of a broad perspective.

This thinking reminds me of the old story of the three blind men and the elephant. After extensive study and firsthand clinical examination, the men could not agree on what they "saw," since they described the animal as a snake (the trunk), as a bird's wing (the ears) and as a tree (the legs). Have we as pain clinicians and pain scientists also lost our perspective? Are we too focused, too specialized, too blind, to truly understand the breadth and latest advances in pain mechanisms and management?

How do we address this problem? One answer is the *Journal of Orofacial Pain*. A major strength of this multidisciplinary journal is that it can provide important and timely information focused on orofacial pain but covering a range from molecules to patients. As Dr Sessle has noted in a recent editorial, the journal has developed several initiatives to provide state-of-the-science information on orofacial pain, including topical reviews, focus articles, and critical commentaries. These new initiatives join the journal's strong tradition of reporting clinical studies and interesting case reports. An important element of these contributions will be their scope. Perhaps that is one of the primary values of our journal as far as our understanding of pain goes—namely, to give us an opportunity to remove our blinders and to develop a clearer and broader vision of our field.



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