

Mr. Parizeau's Visit to the Dentist

Last month the premier of Quebec, Jacques Parizeau, presented a speech to a business group in Toronto. The part of his speech that bothered me was not his comment on why this great country must accept a sovereign Quebec, but his comparison of Canada's continued relationship with Quebec as "... a never-ending visit to the dentist." The newspaper and television media repeatedly reported on that part of his speech as a synopsis of Mr. Parizeau's whole thesis.

Comments such as this only perpetuate a prejudicial stereotype that our profession has not done enough to "politically correct." The politically correct movement is a social ideology that advocates the elimination of actions that offend minority groups and other special interest groups (i.e. the women's movement does not represent a minorital member

of society, but is a special interest group that promotes equal treatment and opportunity for women in society). The movement is particularly concerned with dismissing any form of stereotyping — especially one that perpetuates a false generalization of the character of the members of the group.

Dental stereotyping, as used by Mr. Parizeau, has been so over-used that it has become cliché. Cliché to the point that the continued use of such a stereotypic metaphor ignores the members of the dental profession it offends. No profession has had to put up with more negative stereotypic clichés than dentistry.

Stereotyping is so ingrained in society's metaphoric language that dentistry is far too often referred to as pain-inducing therapy — to the point that it inhibits many people from seeking treatment before it's

too late. I have often treated people who have been avoiding treatment only to be impressed at how painless the procedure actually was. I could take this as a personal compliment but I know that it is the therapy itself, and not necessarily my skill as a dentist, that is painless. In other words, every day dentists across this country surprise patients who have been avoiding treatment by providing them with a painless dental experience.

With regard to the premier of Quebec's comments, perhaps Mr. Parizeau is admitting that he has been avoiding a dentist for a long time. My suggestion to him would be to make an appointment with a dentist soon — maybe then he would see Quebec's relationship with Canada as a healthy one.

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