

# The Communicator

Official Publication of the American Association of Dental Editors & Journalists



**1971, WHEN IAN FLEMING USED DENTISTRY TO SEND 007 TO LAS VEGAS: [SEE EDITOR'S COLUMN P. 1](#)**

FROM THE PRESIDENT  
**Ann Marie Gothard**

**5**

FEATURED ARTICLE  
**Glimpse into History**

**12**

# Writers for Writers

Daniel L. Orr II, DDS, MS, PhD, JD, MD



Perhaps like many editors, my first appointment as a state-level editor a couple of decades ago was unsolicited and surprising. I was without experience as an editor and certainly not used to writing as frequently as that position requires, but accepted the call. After deciding to give it a try, I quickly determined to do two things:

1. Offer factually based truth and if unsure what was true to pepper works with lots of IMOs (“in my opinions”).
2. Find out how to write more like an editor.

#2 is the subject of this paper. If one wants to become more expert in a certain area, it is a good plan to reach out to active, experienced, successful individuals in that area. If the subject involves politics, religion, or medicine, it is judicious to consult with all sides. We have seen a trend for quite a while where the temporarily politically correct power brokers in these and other areas



of controversy turn tail from public discussions about ideas and simply try to ban contrary opinions.

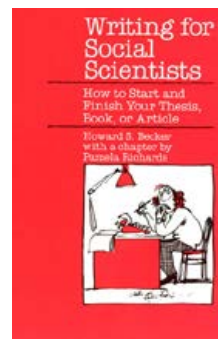
Banning this or that is not new or surprising. Some attribute to Carl Jung the quote:

“Thinking is difficult, that’s why people prefer judging.”<sup>1</sup>

We have seen historically successful opinionators immediately judged and banned without thought for crossing the latest trendy postures. That isn’t necessarily all bad for those writers. At times those rascally independent truthful thinkers are rewarded with more fame and glory, even a few legal settlement dollars.

In my editorial infancy, I identified several writers I wanted to consult with, including Dr. Eric Curtis of Arizona. Eric offered a list of guides he had found helpful, some of which are included below. Thank you, Eric.

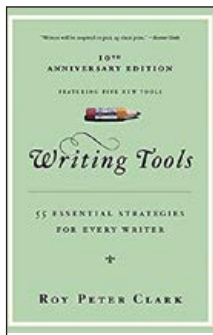
## Writing for Social Scientists, How to Start and Finish your Thesis, Book, or Article



By Howard S. Becker

“Write whatever comes into your head, as fast as you can type, without reference to outlines, notes, data, books or any other aids. The object is to find out what you would like to say, what all your earlier work on the topic or project has already led you to believe.” Howard S. Becker

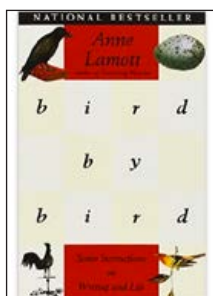
## Writing Tools, 55 Essential Strategies for Every Writer



By Roy Peter Clark

“In his essay ‘Politics and the English Language,’ George Orwell describes the relationship between language abuse and political abuse, how corrupt leaders use the passive voice to obscure unspeakable truths and shroud responsibility for their actions. They say, ‘It must be admitted, now that the report has been reviewed, that mistakes were made,’ rather than, ‘I read the report, and I admit I made a mistake.’ Here’s a life tool: always apologize in the active voice.”  
Roy Peter Clark

### Bird by Bird

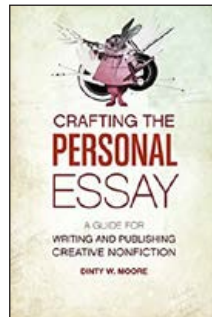


By Anne Lamott

“If something inside you is real, we will probably find it interesting, and it will probably be universal. So, you must risk placing real emotion at the center of your work. Write straight into the emotional center of things. Write toward vulnerability. Don’t worry about appearing sentimental.”

Worry about being unavailable; worry about being absent or fraudulent. Risk being disliked. Tell the truth as you understand it. If you’re a writer, you have a moral obligation to do this. And it is a revolutionary act—truth is always subversive.” Anne Lamott

## Crafting The Personal Essay



By Dinty W. Moore

“What are minnows but brief flashes? And what are thoughts? And how do you capture a brief flash, even for a second?” Dinty W. Moore

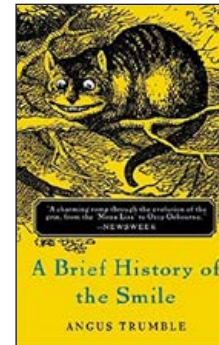
---

*If one wants to become more expert in a certain area, it is a good plan to reach out to active, experienced, successful individuals in that area.*

---

## Specifically for Dental Writers

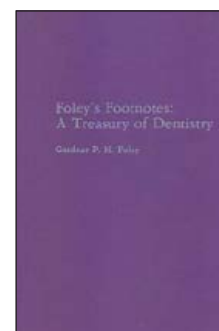
### A Brief History of the Smile



By Angus Trumble

“...I thought it best to arrange the book thematically, so that each chapter might explore a different sort of smile, beginning with ‘Decorum’ (the polite smile), and proceeding thence to ‘Lewdness’ (rude grinning), ‘Desire’ (the coy smile, lipstick), ‘Mirth’ (smiling and humor), ‘Wisdom’ (the smile of reason, the stoic smile, the saintly smile), and ‘Deceit’ (the fake smile).” Angus Trumble

### Foley’s Footnotes: A Treasury of Dentistry



By Gardner P. H. Foley

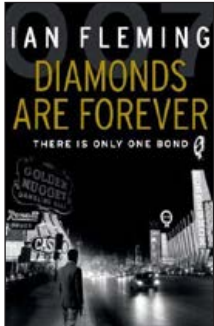
---

*Editor’s Note: Gardner P.H. Foley taught for 41 years at the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery and remains a singular dental historian—he was not a dentist. He published in the JADA beginning in 1950. But became dentally famous for hundreds of “Foley’s Footnotes,” interesting dentist-related tales, one or more of which was published in every issue of the JADA from 1965 until 1980.*

Continues ➤

Continues &gt;&gt;

## Diamonds Are Forever



By Ian Fleming

“The only reason I can give for enjoying Ian Fleming’s *Diamonds Are Forever* (1956) is that fact that a key figure in the biff-bang James Bond story is a dentist. This chap, while engaged in the practice of his profession with workers at a diamond mine in Sierra Leone, managed to gyp his employers out of £100,000 worth of diamonds monthly.”

‘Still talking about their teeth, he would pick the stones out of their mouths and hold them up to the dentist’s spotlight; then softly he would say 50, 75, 100, and they

always nodded and took the notes and hid them in their clothes and went out of the surgery with a couple of aspirin in a twist of paper as an alibi. They had to accept his price. There was not hope of a native getting the diamonds out. When the miners did get away, perhaps once a year to visit their tribe or bury a relative, there was a routine of x-rays and castor oil to be gone through, and a grim future if they were caught stealing. It was easy to go to the dental surgery and pick the day when “Him” was on duty. Paper money didn’t show up on x-rays.’ Ian Fleming

“The diamonds thus gathered by the dentist were sent out monthly by air through an

expertly conducted procedure set up by a highly successful criminal organization. Some of the stolen stones—‘industrial diamonds’—were eventually used by American dentists for ‘drilling teeth.’” Ian Fleming and Gardner P. H. Foley

*Editor’s Note: Diamonds are Forever climaxes in fabulous Las Vegas, Nevada. Viva Las Vegas!*

**Code for Dental Editors** By *The AADEJ*

“The first responsibility of the editor is to the readers.”<sup>2</sup> AADEJ

Write On!

## References

- 1) Jung C. Psychology Spot, <https://psychology-spot.com/why-people-prefer-judging/>, accessed August 21, 2023.
- 2) AADEJ, Code for Dental Editors, <https://www.aadej.org/editor-guidelines>, accessed August 21, 2023.







## **AADEJ offers seminar at The Greater New York Dental Meeting (GNYDM)**

**November 27, 2023 | 9:45 am - 12:45 pm | Jacob K. Javits Convention Center  
429 11th Avenue | New York, NY 10001**

**Registration to the GNYDM and this course is free, to all AADEJ and ACD members.  
Use Promo Code EDTGNY23 and search course #4570 - NOTE: Course time change.**



### **Join us for A Whole New World of Communication - Podcasting, Videocasting, Art & Cartoons Mix Your Media - It's Worth a 1000 Words**



#### **David McCarty, MD, FAASM**

*Dr. Dave McCarty is a board-certified specialist in Sleep Medicine and a pioneer in the practice of patient-centered care for those who suffer from sleep disorders. An award-winning educator, author, cartoonist, and podcast host, he is passionate about empowering individuals with knowledge that restores confidence and personal agency, as each patient navigates the landscape of disease and wellness, within an increasingly fragmented healthcare system. He is the co-creator of Empowered Sleep Apnea, an innovative cross-platform educational project combining storytelling, cartooning, scientific rigor, and quite a bit of fun, all in the name of helping individuals (and providers) navigate the fascinating but complex disorder known as "Sleep Apnea." In 2023, the project comprises a website, a book (Empowered Sleep Apnea: A Handbook for Patients and the People*

*Who Care About Them, co-authored with Ellen Stothard, PhD), a blog (Dave's Notes) and a podcast (Empowered Sleep Apnea: THE PODCAST).*

#### **Title: Communicating Complexity: Harnessing the Power of Translation**

- What journalists can learn from Management Science in a complex world
- Educational Styles: Instructive vs collaborative (assaultive vs engaging)
- The failed educational arc of Ignac Semmelweis - what we can learn from it
- Type of communication depends on the complexity of the message (simple to complex - the more complex the message, the more storyteller-forward the communication style must be)
- Lessons from the Empowered Sleep Apnea journey
  - Failed book attempt as solo artist
  - Podcast as a conversational duo; cartoons informing the conversational development
  - Beautiful Blue Book that transcends silos



#### **Dr. Chance Bodini**

*Dr. Chance Bodini is a general dentist and entrepreneur. Dr. Bodini obtained his undergraduate education at the University of California, San Diego, and graduated from the University of Maryland, School of Dentistry in 2015. He currently serves as the dental director for Indian Health Council, in San Diego. He is a podcast enthusiast, and founder of Proximal Contact, LLC where his team builds tools for dentists. Under Proximal Contact, LLC, Dr. Bodini has built a new online network for dentists at EmbrasureSpace.com and he maintains a directory of dental podcasts, guests, speakers, and continuing education courses at DentWoo.com.*

#### **Title: Your Voice is Your Brand: How Podcasts and Videocasts Can Be Used to Grow Your Audience**

- Introduction to podcasts and videocasts
- Explanation of tech stack and description of necessary equipment
- Expansion of the audience by promotion



#### **Kathryn Humphries, Art Director Harper's Magazine**

*Kathryn Humphries is the Art Director of Harper's Magazine and faculty in the Art History Department at the School of Visual Arts. Focus: Content Strategist, Art Director*

#### **Title: The Role of Art and Design in Non-Verbal Communication**

- Sending a message through graphics
- The function of art in journalism
- What does color say?

# Reflecting on My Term as President of the AADEJ

Ann Marie Gothard



*Dental journalism plays a pivotal role, acting as a bridge within the dental community. It provides a platform for disseminating critical information, fostering innovation, and promoting best practices.*

**W**ith our Annual Meeting fast approaching, I am overwhelmed with gratitude and a sense of accomplishment for the privilege of serving as the President of the American Association of Dental Editors and Journalists (AADEJ). Throughout the past year, I've had the honor of collaborating with a dedicated and talented group of editors who share a common goal—to elevate dental journalism to new levels of excellence.

From the moment I assumed this role, I recognized the weight of responsibility it carried. Dental journalism plays a pivotal role, acting as a bridge within the dental community. It provides a platform for disseminating critical information, fostering innovation, and promoting best practices. As the current President and in line with my predecessors, our commitment remains

unwavering—to create a forum that strengthens the bonds between dental editors and journalists, collectively cultivating a culture of excellence within our field.

One of the primary objectives during my tenure was to expand the association's membership base. We understood that a diverse and inclusive membership is essential for capturing new ideas, experiences, and perspectives. While our membership growth goal wasn't fully met, we significantly enhanced our engagement with colleagues across the dental spectrum, laying the groundwork for a more inclusive organization. Through in-person, virtual, and online interactions, we broadened our reach, fostering a vibrant community united in its dedication to advancing dental journalism.

At the heart of our mission was our commitment to offering programs that not only enriched

the knowledge and skills of our members but also ignited their passion to excel as dental editors and journalists. We presented online workshops and discussions, and our dynamic Program Committee has curated an outstanding lineup for our upcoming October Annual Meeting, along with a special session at the Greater New York Dental Meeting. On behalf of the AADEJ Board, I extend special appreciation to Dr. Kathy Gibson, the Program Committee Chair, as well as Committee Members Mali Schantz-Feld, Mary Ellen Lukaswitz, and Denise Maihofer. Your unwavering dedication and innovative approach in selecting pertinent topics that resonate with our members' interests, along with your contribution to advancing professional editing skills, are greatly appreciated.

Annually, the AADEJ has the privilege of acknowledging and celebrating exceptional





contributions to the field. We extend our gratitude to the ADA Council on Communications and the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) ADEAGies Foundation for their collaboration in recognizing excellence in dental journalism. The Distinguished Dental Editor Award and the William J. Gies Editorial Award respectively honor the editorial expertise of dental editors, along with their commitment to disseminating professional and business news and information that educates and

informs practicing dentists and dental students. Through these awards, spotlighting exceptional reporting, innovative storytelling, and insightful analysis, we aim to set a benchmark inspiring others to continually strive for excellence. The enthusiastic response to these awards underscores the remarkable talent within our association. Keep an eye on the AADEJ website in October for the announcement of the winners.

With Dr. Hugh Wunderlich assuming the role of incoming President, AADEJ is primed to

soar to new heights in the coming year. The foundation we've established is rock-solid, and while a niche organization, our members' passion is unwavering.

In conclusion, serving as the President of the AADEJ has been an immeasurable honor and privilege. My heartfelt gratitude extends to every current and former member for their contributions, their enthusiasm, and their steadfast dedication. Together, we've elevated our field, and I eagerly anticipate the exciting future ahead.



# Unique Members Require a Unique Organization

Denise Maihofer, AADEJ Secretary-Treasurer and Interim Executive Director



*Dental editors, journalists, and communicators are a unique set of individuals. They're passionate in their resolve about sharing their insights, as well as truthful and current information.*

“”

I would be remiss if I didn't begin this article with a major shout out about our 2023 Annual Meeting in Orlando, Oct. 4-5. Our Program Committee has worked countless hours to create a remarkable program that offers CE for every level of editor/journalist/communicator and the most up-to-date information on things like AI, legal issues, design, and writing skills. All are welcome to attend, whether or not you are a member. Non-member registration is a bit higher, but includes a year's membership in AADEJ, so it's a win-win for everyone. If you haven't already received the digital brochure, go to our website [AADEJ.org](http://AADEJ.org) for the link on our home page to download the brochure containing all the info you need. All fellow journalists and communicators are welcome and should find this meeting extremely beneficial.

Now I'd like to share some thoughts on association membership which seems to be on the decline across the country. It's a fact that all organizations are losing membership at an alarming rate with market share declining to a worrisome level. AADEJ has been no different—with the emphases on “has.” Albeit some of our past membership decline was due to an unusual amount of transition in executive directors due to health, and other reasons. As a result recruitment and retention took a very back seat during those four or five years. I am very happy to state that we are now on the upswing with membership and hope to improve it two-fold in the next year or so. We have a great board and enthusiastic members that really believe in the benefits of our organization. Our affiliation as a non-geographic section of ACD has also been a great benefit to AADEJ and our

members by helping us with support in our CE, dues collection, and registration. The transition has involved a learning curve for both organizations, and we are working together to create a smooth operation going forward. It is also a plus to know that ACD values what AADEJ has to offer dental communicators, which is why their affiliation was offered.

Dental editors, journalists, and communicators are a unique set of individuals. They're passionate in their resolve about sharing their insights, as well as truthful and current information. AADEJ is a unique association that offers a network, unlike any other organization, for dental communicators. Whether it be digital, print, podcasts, videocast, or other forms of CE programming, the AADEJ has the resources to help. We are continually expanding and hope to provide even more support



for the ever-evolving world of dental communications.

In 1931, AADEJ's sole focus was on the dental journalist—offering help, networking, and education. Of course, today things have changed. Much of that communication has now become highly concentrated in social media. Digital education, through webinars and podcasts, even social media now disseminate information to their dental audience at a much faster pace. With that comes many challenges and a need for guidance and support. AADEJ is there to provide it. We always remain open to member's suggestions on CE courses that

will keep all of us ahead of the curve. This year we are offering a CE series in New York, during the Greater New York Dental Meeting, featuring CE courses on communicating through podcasts as well as through visuals. One of the lectures is presented by Kathryn Humphries, Art Director of *Harper's Magazine*. Of course, this is more like "preaching to the choir" if you are receiving the *Communicator*, you are most likely a member. We are doing our best to get the benefits of AADEJ out to those who don't know about us. We will be launching a Facebook page this month to extend our social media presence and our LinkedIn has also taken a

jump in followers. We hope that our own members will spread the word about AADEJ and its benefits, as networking through word of mouth is always a great way to bolster any organization.

I have enjoyed this year serving as your interim executive director and working to improve an organization that I feel truly invested in and believe in. I look forward to seeing many of you again this year, as well as meeting many of you for the first time. We all look forward to sharing our great CE program, cocktail reception, and entertaining lunch with everyone in Orlando!

*See you in October!*



# World Famous Hugh Wunderlich

Hugh Wunderlich



**A**pparently, I am world-famous. First, it was letters from Nigerian Oil sheiks seeking help with their surplus of money. Then it was emails from distressed friends stuck in foreign countries needing bail money. Now this email, it's...

*Greetings from Brisbane!!*

*My name is Dr. Robert Duewright, I live and work as a plastic surgeon here in Brisbane Australia, I am originally from Milan, Italy, I have been a plastic surgeon since 1996. I do face lifts and breasts lifts also known as Mastopexy. I have lots of happy clients here in Australia.*

(I hope he is a better surgeon than a spell checker. But it was sent on the internet....so it must be true)

*I have been looking for a Dentist for over a week now till i met an old friend at a Beauty Conference that was held in Australia, I spoke with her about my client and was referred to you. She gave me your contact details, she said she came to your office with a friend a year ago before she relocated with her family to Australia, so i decided to contact you to know if you will be able to do a Smile makeover treatment for my client. My Clients name is Ms Emily Harper, She is a model here in Australia*

(OH stop right there...let me Google that name...Must be true there she is....oh my)

*She will be needing a Simple smile makeover treatment when she arrives the states, She will be coming to the states in 3 weeks time for a modeling job and will be residing in your Area temporary until the necessary arrangement for her job has been made before she leaves.*

(Let's see...international, amazing hot Australian model has a modeling job for 3 weeks in New Port Richey, Florida...seems about right)

*Pls tell me a little more about your self, how long have you been a Dentist? Would you be able to provide her with the Simple smile makeover treatments 8 upper teeth and 8 lower teeth, when she arrives the states in 3 weeks time?*

(Well I am a Virgo ...I like cats and long walks on the beach...)

*Pls i need you to get back to me with the amount you charge Per tooth and also let me know if she can advance pay you with a Certified Check drawn from a US bank. You can schedule her from the 26th of this Month.*

*You can view some of Ms Harper Pictures from the link below:*

Um...No, thank you I don't think we should be e-looking at that. However, I clearly will be making oodles of money on this case. Well, just as soon as my Nigerian Oil money bubbles up.

*Till I read from you remain blessed.*

*Editor's Note: Dr. Wunderlich requested the solicitation be printed as is, typos and all!*

# Pay to Publish

## Does Your Journal Require Contributors to Advertise? Should it?

Jeremy Tuber



A couple of years ago, I reached out to a well-known dental publication in the hopes they might run some of my articles on how dentists could get the most out of their dental videos. I'd read this publication for a couple of years and felt my content would not only fit in with the rest of the publication, dental videos hadn't been yet covered, so I'd provide some new insights. I reassured the publisher that I would offer his dentist readers unbiased, practical information, rather than leveraging the article as a thinly-veiled self-promotional advertisement. I also let him know that I publish a monthly journal as well: the Arizona Dental Association's, *Inscriptions*.

---

*The question is, "Was he wrong to ask/request/demand that contributors support the publication?"*

---

While the response I received was respectful and professional, the publisher made it clear that they weren't going to take articles unless you supported the publication through paid advertising.

"Advertising is not required to publish in our publication, however articles that meet our guidelines and that are ad-supported are given priority in each issue. Currently, we have a backlog of great content that is not ad-supported and they must wait until an issue's page budget allows for them to be published. This queue can take several months. I have cc'ed our sales manager for your region. He can go into further detail about advertising options and how they can complement the content you provide."

I was surprised and irked by his answer. After all, I was offering content that his readers would value, and I wasn't looking to sell them or consciously steer them in any self-serving way. I want to

help dentists make the right decision for them, so I didn't appreciate his insinuation that I needed to pay if I wanted to be published. And yet, I had to admit that the manner in which he answered was subtle, polished, and well-crafted. Clearly, he'd given thought to how he could articulate "No advertise; no publication," but in a kinder, gentler way. This is not just a publisher, but a business person who recognized that profits were as important as prose.

The question is, "Was he wrong to ask/request/demand that contributors support the publication?"

Admittedly, I am not sure I have a definitive answer. I am not sure there is one.

On one hand, the publisher owes a responsibility to their readers—in my case, member dentists practicing in Arizona. My

**Continues** ➤



## Continues &gt;&gt;

responsibility (as I see it) is to provide them with unbiased, helpful, practical information that will assist them in their professional and personal lives. Whether that content is provided by a paid advertiser or not is of little concern to me. I need good content, regardless of who is offering it.

And yet, the dental association (the folks that pay the bills, and my salary) need the publication to turn a profit, so granting free, ongoing exposure to contributors who will never support the association doesn't seem like a symbiotic relationship or a viable solution.

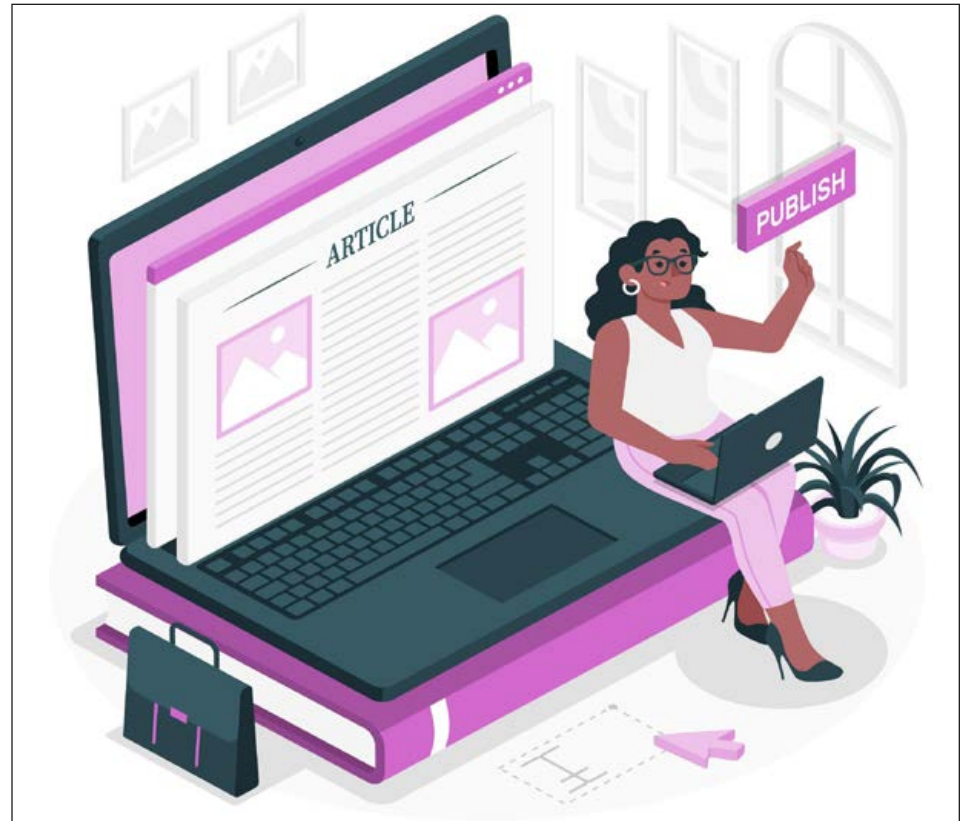
So, we're back to square one again: "Is it wrong to ask/request/demand that contributors support the publication?"

The politically correct, safe/cowardly answer is, "Each publication must decide this on their own," and while I believe that's true, I'll offer my own thoughts.

Like so many other facets of life, the right way to go (at least for me) isn't black/white, yes/no, or 0/1. It's gray, it's messy, and it's sort of a hybrid approach.

The word "ongoing" is the linchpin in how I would approach a "pay to play" editorial policy. "Everything in moderation," right? Well, I believe that mantra applies here.

Over the years, I've been open to non-supporting authors contributing to the monthly journal. However, those who are looking for regular spots/columns in the publication are "encouraged" to support the dental association (those kind folks who pay for the printing). That support may come in the form of print advertising, but not necessarily. Perhaps they could offer a free webinar, sponsor an event, or offer our members free/discounted services. Having a mutually beneficial relationship is important, but restricting



contributors to offering support only through paid advertising is short-sighted.

Outside of offering options for contributors to provide support back to the publication, I'd recommend maintaining a level playing field (at least as much as you can), and being clear, transparent, and upfront with how your publication accepts/evaluates submissions. It's human nature for people to ask for/want more than the next person, so being upfront, transparent, and evenhanded will help you avoid "That contributor got more than me!" flare-ups and verbal scrapes. And yes, there are self-absorbed people out there who are always "in it for themselves," so be wary of them. I've coordinated with them over the years—authors just looking for as much free exposure as they can muster.

Ultimately, I can't conclude whether a rigid pay-to-publish

model is ethical or not. That's something for you to decide. Additionally, I can't definitively say that contributors who unabashedly mine for free exposure (without supporting the publisher in any way outside of providing content) are unethical either. It's not the way I "do business," and it does give me an uneasy feeling in my gut, but a lot of people don't see anything wrong with it. That said, like any other relationship you have in life (and yes, there is a relationship between contributor and publisher) there needs to be a good-faith give and take. That's what you should be looking for from contributors. If both of you are committed to synergy and forging a symbiotic relationship, both parties (along with your readers) will benefit, and isn't that what we should shoot for?

# Glimpse into History

## No Pain, Much to Gain—the Quest for Anesthesia

Mali Schantz-Feld, MA, CDE



The 1800s was a time of dental advancements, but the pain of treatment kept many potential patients from seeking necessary treatment. Seeing patients' discomfort troubled dentist Horace Wells, who opened his practice in Hartford, Connecticut in 1836. Biographer W. Harry Archer wrote, "Horace Wells was a sensitive and compassionate young dental surgeon as has been indicated in his letters. The suffering he caused when he extracted teeth troubled him greatly. Because the extraction of teeth was one of the most frequently performed dental operations, his mind was constantly occupied with the thought of discovering some way to prevent the terrible pain which accompanied the operation."<sup>1</sup> Wells was already an inventor with one of his devices

being a foot treadle-powered shower, but his life's pursuit was to validate nitrous oxide as a pain killer for dental procedures.

In 1844, Wells and his wife, Elizabeth, attended a demonstration on nitrous oxide that was led by showman and lecturer Gardner Colton. While the spotlight was meant for Colton, Wells' attention was focused on his assistant, who had inhaled the gas as part of the presentation. The man had run into a bench and injured his leg. Upon speaking with him after the show, Wells discovered that he did not feel pain from his injury until the nitrous oxide had worn off.<sup>2</sup>

Seeing this as an opportunity to help dental patients, Wells decided to be the dental guinea pig and try the pain-relieving gas himself. Colton came to his office and administered the nitrous oxide to Wells. Dentist John Riggs extracted Wells' wisdom tooth. Wells was noted as saying that throughout the extraction he felt "not so much as the prick of a pin."<sup>3</sup> Wells learned how to administer the gas and began offering "painless dentistry" to his own patients.

Wanting to share his amazing results and ready to show his discovery to the world—Wells set up a demonstration for Harvard Medical School Students at Massachusetts General Hospital. Unfortunately, the patient moaned during the procedure, and perceiving that he was in

pain, the audience showed their indignation by heckling him out of the lecture hall. Some say that the patient even tried to explain that he was not actually in pain, but the crowd would not listen. Daniel Curtis, a friend of Wells said, "I am not able to say whether the patient experienced any pain or not. There was certainly no manifestation of it, yet some present expressed themselves in the belief that it was an imposition." Disappointed but undaunted, Wells returned to his practice and continued to provide nitrous oxide to his patients.

In 1848, Wells decided to seek more recognition in New York. Moving without his wife and child, Wells became depressed and turned to using ether and chloroform to ease his emotional pain. He soon became addicted. The substances made him confused and delusional, and he went outside and threw acid on two women in the street, burning their clothing. Wells was jailed in the Tombs Prison for his crime. After his arrest, he was allowed to go home to get some personal items. Among those, he included a bottle of chloroform. In despair, he took chloroform and slashed the femoral artery in his thigh with his razor.<sup>4</sup> He bled to death at the age of 33. His epitaph reads, "The Discoverer of Anesthesia."

Wells' right to that honor was sometimes questioned. William

Continues »

## Continues »

Morton, who was Wells' short-lived apprentice and partner in dentistry focused on ether as an anesthetic for dental use in 1846 together with Dr. Charles Jackson. They devised a product comprised of sulphuric ether, a fragrance, and coloring agent and called the substance "Letheon," and applied for a patent. History is not kind to Morton. One biographer, Richard J. Wolfe, considered Morton "intellectually incapable of realizing the significance of anesthesia and used his role opportunistically, purely as a means of reaping a financial reward by being the only person who could extract teeth painlessly. This became a lifelong obsession with him, and he stopped at little to achieve it."<sup>5</sup> In

1864, the American Dental Association confirmed Wells as the discoverer of anesthesia, and the American Medical Association also recognized him in 1870.

The road to anesthesia for dental use was definitely fraught with controversy and competition. One article that tried to unravel the tangled web to anesthesia fame asserted, "Had these individuals not known one another, the discovery of anesthesia would have proceeded in approximately the same timeframe, but Wells, Morton, and Jackson would have enjoyed more productive careers as well as longer, more peaceful lives."<sup>6</sup>

*Note: The first dental school, the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery, did not open until 1840. The*

*only dental training that Wells had was an apprenticeship in Boston in 1834.<sup>7</sup>*

## References

- 1) Archer WH. Life and Letters of Horace Wells Discoverer of Anesthesia. *Journal of the American College of Dentists*. 1944;11(2):106.
- 2) Haridas RP. Horace Wells' Demonstration of Nitrous Oxide in Boston. *Anesthesiology*. November 2013;119:1014-1022. <https://doi.org/10.1097/ALN.0b013e3182a771ea>.
- 3) Gifford EE. Horace Wells Discovers Pain-free Dentistry. *ConnecticutHistory.org*. Published December 10, 2021. <https://connecticuthistory.org/horace-wells-discovers-pain-free-dentistry/>. Accessed March 23, 2022.
- 4) Horace Wells and Anæsthesia. *Nature* 161, 123-124 (1948). <https://doi.org/10.1038/161123c0>.
- 5) Adams AK. Tarnished Idol: William Thomas Green Morton and the Introduction of Surgical Anesthesia. *J R Soc Med*. 2002;95(5):266-267.
- 6) Desai MS, Desai SP. Discovery of Modern Anesthesia: A Counterfactual Narrative about Crawford W. Long, Horace Wells, Charles T. Jackson, and William T. G. Morton. *AANA J*. 2015 Dec;83(6):410-5. PMID: 26742335.
- 7) Gordon S. Wells, Horace. In *American National Biography*. Oxford University Press. Published online February 2000. <https://www.anb.org/view/10.1093/anb/9780198606697.001.0001/anb-9780198606697-e-1200962>. Accessed March 24, 2022.





# AADEJ

American Association of Dental Editors and  
Journalists  
2112 West Galena Boulevard, Suite 8-312  
Aurora, IL, 60506  
www.aadej.org

## Contribute to *The Communicator*

---

*The Communicator* encourages commentary from the AADEJ membership in addition to new works for consideration for publication. We are currently looking in particular for historical dental or writing-related articles.

*Please forward comments and submissions to the  
Editor-in-Chief at [dlorrii@gmail.com](mailto:dlorrii@gmail.com)*

Thank you!