

# Developing a 'world view'

I hope that these special issues will act as a stimulus to those who have never visited South East Asia to consider developing their world view further, and an insight to those who know the area already of how it is now.

**This issue of the *BDJ* is, I believe, a first. The whole issue (and also our supplement *Dental Business*) is focused on Hong Kong and South East Asia. The main reason for this departure from our traditional approach is to promote the fact that the *BDJ* (despite the fact that the word 'British' is enshrined in the title) is developing stronger links internationally.**

In practical terms this means that the *BDJ* and *Dental Business* both contain papers from members of the Faculty of Dentistry of the University of Hong Kong, as well as articles about dentistry in Hong Kong and China. The important question though, and one that I asked myself before agreeing to publish these special issues, is what can the busy dentist (anywhere in the world) glean from looking at the Hong Kong issues?

Many people seem to find it difficult to see outside their own locality, let alone their own country. After all, apart from a momentary flash of interest as a news item appears on television or in the newspaper, we are too busy just surviving in our own world to consider the effects of global change elsewhere. We are aware of events through the media as soon as they happen, but it is just another news item. For most of us, especially in terms of our business or employment, what matters is what is happening locally.

The main advantage of discovering what is happening elsewhere in the world is the potential change in our perception of how things are, often termed 'world view'. Perception is a powerful factor because it is how we perceive reality, how we think the world works and how we fit into that perception. This obviously affects how we behave, in terms of how we deal with both people and events, but also in how we plan and make decisions. Our world view has a major influence on our future, because our decisions today will decide our future tomorrow. To take a simple example, the subjects we choose at school will influence the rest of our lives and in many cases play a major part in deciding our choice of career.

Thus our world view affects the way we interact with people, the major decisions we make over our longterm relationships, the way we spend our time at work and play and our beliefs in terms of our own abilities and how other people will perceive us. In short, it is an immensely powerful force in shaping our lives. Most of the time world view seems to be decided for us, either by external factors such as the media and the people we allow to influence us, or by internal factors relating to our past experiences, beliefs, values and attitudes. In reality though, we have ways of controlling these factors by choosing the people we interact with (to an extent at least) and by ensuring we choose to experience what we feel is appropriate to help us shape our future. Another simple example of this is the way that people will often obtain relevant job experience prior to applying for a particular subject at university or for a job.

To return to the theme of this leader, learning about other countries is part of developing your world view and will influence choices and decisions you make, which will in turn affect your future. You will see opportunities you might have missed before. You will think differently about strategic decisions. You will behave differently which will affect those around you, whether patients or staff. The benefits, so difficult to grasp before, become so obvious that it is hard to believe they are not the result of the way you always thought of things.

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