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Academy of Prosthodontics centennial: The emergence and development of prosthodontics as a specialty



The first formal gatherings of dentists interested in the field of prosthodontics began in the early 20th century. In 1914, a “Dental Clinic Club” was established by dentists in Detroit, Michigan, with the stated purpose of advancing dental education and clinical practice. Dr William A. Giffen was the initial director of the Prosthodontic Section of the Detroit Dental Clinic Club.¹ This local development would later inspire dentists in other cities and serve as a stimulus for the development of the first national prosthodontic organization, which later became known as the Academy of Prosthodontics (AP). The purpose of this article is to outline the development of the AP and how it impacted the specialty of prosthodontics and the dental profession.

THE FOUNDING OF A NATIONAL PROSTHODONTIC SOCIETY

Dr Weston A. Price, the Director of the National Dental Association Research Commission, noted that little had been done to develop the scientific principles in prosthetic dentistry. Dr Price recognized that bringing together Dr George H. Wilson (Cleveland), Dr Milus M. House (Indianapolis), and Dr William A. Giffen (Detroit) was an opportunity to share clinical approaches, materials science, and future needs for the discipline of prosthodontics to advance. Comparable organizational activities were also starting for oral surgery, orthodontics, and periodontics during the early 20th century.

In 1918, the National Dental Association (American Dental Association [ADA]) meeting was held in Chicago, Illinois. Drs William A. Giffen, Dayton Dunbar Campbell, Milus M. House, I. Lester Furnas, B. F. Thielen, and Alex H. Paterson were in attendance and met at the request of Dr Wilson to discuss the formation of a national prosthodontic society. They concluded that a focus on research, training, and education was necessary in prosthodontics.

After the preliminary meeting with Dr Wilson, the group was highly motivated and invited other dentists with an interest in prosthodontics for a luncheon meeting

at the Congress Hotel in Chicago. Thirty-one dentists attended the first meeting, and Dr Wilson led a discussion concerning the need, purpose, and usefulness of the proposed prosthodontic organization. Three days later, on August 9, 1918, the National Society of Denture Prosthetists (NSDP) was established and officers were unanimously appointed: Drs George H. Wilson, honorary president; William A. Giffen, president; Milus M. House, 1st vice president; Alex Patterson, 2nd vice president; Dayton D. Campbell, secretary; and Russell W. Tench, treasurer. Drs George B. Snow and J. Leon Williams were selected as honorary members and Drs Claude J. Stansbury and W. E. Cummer as councilmen. This group became the first Executive Council of the NSDP.^{2,3} Dr Giffen would later become president of the ADA in 1923 (Fig. 1).

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROSTHODONTIC SPECIALTY

It was recognized by the NSDP that a significant percentage of the adult population was edentulous, and that successful treatment of the edentulous patient was limited by an incomplete understanding of physiology, function, and patient anatomy. Established preventive strategies and agreed-upon standards for clinical care were needed. Additionally, the lack of suitable materials limited the effectiveness of prosthetic treatment options. The NSDP, seeking to become a “research society,” desired to become the organization to address these unmet patient needs in oral health and function.⁴ The organization’s size was purposefully limited to 50 active members with a goal of close membership interaction, collaboration with the ADA, and improving oral health for the general public. The NSDP membership emphasized professional development among members with a commitment toward scholarship and fellowship. The scientific programs of the early meetings were of 2 weeks’ duration and included essays, discussions, demonstrations, and clinical participation. Members typically travelled by train to the meeting, often bringing



Figure 1. William A. Giffen, 1st President of the National Society of Denture Prosthetists (1918-1919). He was also president of the American Dental Association from 1923-1924.

their own patients for demonstration and teaching purposes (Fig. 2).

In 1940, the NSDP voted to change the organization's name to the Academy of Denture Prosthetics (ADP). The words "study, investigate, promote, and disseminate" were embraced as mission objectives and were placed onto the Academy's seal.⁵ As the discipline of prosthodontics was evolving, it became apparent that there was a need to establish prosthodontics as a specialty of dentistry. Subsequently, the ADA asked the ADP to represent the specialty of prosthodontics, which led to the development of the American Board of Prosthodontics (ABP) in 1947 and the *Journal of Prosthetic Dentistry* (JPD) in 1950.^{6,7} The Pacific Coast Society for Prosthodontics and the American Prosthodontic Society joined the ADP as founding organizations of the JPD. Dr Bert Hooper was elected as the first president of the ABP, and Dr Carl Boucher served as the first editor of the JPD. The Academy sponsored the ABP examinations for 25 years, a process that further defined the specialty and the organization.

In 1965, leaders from 10 prosthodontic academies and societies met in Chicago to organize many of the existing prosthodontic organizations into the Federation of Prosthodontic Organizations (FPO), which included: the Academy of Denture Prosthetics, the American Academy of Crown and Bridge Prosthodontics, the American Academy of Maxillofacial Prosthetics, the American Academy of Restorative Dentistry, the American Equilibration Society, the American Prosthodontic Society, the Greater New York Academy of Prosthodontics, the Pacific Coast Society of Prosthodontics, the Southeastern



Figure 2. The National Society of Denture Prosthetists held their 1920 meeting in Boston with 34 members present. Milus M. House presided.



Figure 3. Fellows of Academy of Denture Prosthetic at the 50th Anniversary in 1968, held in New Orleans. Daniel H. Gehl presided.

Academy of Prosthodontics, and the Canadian Academy of Prosthodontics.⁸ The stated purpose of the FPO was to provide a unified voice for the specialty.

The FPO and the ADP were actively involved in the development of formal prosthodontics education standards, which led to a 2-year postgraduate program in prosthodontics that was mandated by the ADA in 1965.⁹ In 1968, the Academy celebrated its 50th Anniversary in New Orleans, Louisiana, presided by Dr Daniel Gehl (Fig. 3). In 1972, the sponsorship of the ABP was transferred to the FPO and subsequently, after the dissolution of the FPO in 1994, to the American College of Prosthodontists.

The Academy's scientific sessions expanded well beyond the discipline of removable prosthodontics and increasingly included fixed and maxillofacial prosthodontics. Implant prosthodontics was introduced to North America by Dr George Zarb based upon the seminal research by Dr Per-Ingvar Branemark, who was installed as an honorary fellow of the Academy in 1984.¹⁰⁻¹⁴ In 1991, the organization's name was changed to the Academy of Prosthodontics (AP), which better represented the broad range of clinical treatment provided by prosthodontists. The stated goals included rigorous professional development in an environment of high standards, fellowship for the exchange of clinical expertise,



Figure 4. Dr Brien R. Lang presided at the Academy of Prosthodontics 75th Anniversary in 1993, held in Vancouver, British Columbia.

and a commitment to improve patient care. Unique features of the Academy remained with its modest membership size that fostered fellowship and exacting presentation standards during the week-long scientific meeting. In 1993, the Academy celebrated its 75th anniversary in Vancouver, British Columbia, with Dr Brien Lang presiding (Fig. 4).

LEADERSHIP IN PROSTHODONTICS

The Academy of Prosthodontics established the Educational and Research Foundation of Prosthodontics in 1960, which later became the Academy of Prosthodontics Foundation (APF) in 1991. The APF served to financially and programmatically support education, research, and the clinical practice of prosthodontics. The APF provides grants for educational purposes, outreach services, and leadership projects, and funds prosthodontics resident research. Research findings resulting from such grants are often presented at the Academy's annual meetings.

The Academy published the first Glossary of Prosthodontic Terms in 1956 in the JPD. The ninth edition of the Glossary was published in 2017.^{15,16}

The Principles, Concepts, and Practices in Prosthodontics were a series of reference documents developed by the Academy between 1959 and 1994 summarizing generally accepted ideas, methods, and techniques in the clinical practice of prosthodontics.¹⁷

In 1989, Prosthodontics 21, a national symposium under the aegis of the FPO, was held at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Dr William R. Laney led the discussion on the anticipated needs of prosthodontic



Figure 5. Evidence-based dentistry workshop attendees at McMaster's University. Back row (left to right): Gary R. Goldstein, David A. Felton, James D. Anderson, Jack D. Preston, and Brien R. Lang. Front row (left to right): Alan B. Carr, Glen P. McGivney, Rhonda F. Jacob, George A. Zarb, and Patrick M. Lloyd. (Photograph from J Prosthet Dent 2001;85:525-6.)

education and research in the 21st century.^{18,19} The Editorial Council of the JPD, the AP, and the APF were essential to the development and implementation of Prosthodontics 21, which culminated in evidence-based Prosthodontic Research Symposia at McMaster's University in Hamilton, Ontario, in 1994-5 (Fig. 5).²⁰ The vision for Prosthodontics 21 included an emphasis on critical appraisal in prosthodontics, designed to improve publication standards.

Over the past 25 years, Academy fellows and other invited individuals have participated in community service outreach projects. Prosthodontic care has been provided to Native Americans who could not afford or did not have access to care at 11 Indian Health Service clinics in Alaska, Montana, Oklahoma, and Utah. Additional outreach projects occurred in Illinois, and most recently in Uganda. In 1994, President Clinton acknowledged the Academy's humanitarian outreach efforts with a letter recognizing AP members.

Future Leaders in Prosthodontics (FLIP) workshops have been held in Minnesota, California, New York, England, and Mississippi, under the direction of Dr Sreenivas Koka. These workshops have been funded by the APF, the Editorial Council of the JPD, Career Design in Dentistry, and Nobel Biocare. The FLIP workshops are designed to develop leadership and management skills in recent prosthodontic graduates with the goal of more prosthodontists integrating into leadership positions in industry and dental education. FLIP program faculty are drawn from the Academy's fellowship.

100 YEARS OF FELLOWSHIP AND SCHOLARSHIP

The Academy of Prosthodontics scientific sessions are now open to all interested dentists. Scientific programs consist of scholarly essays with critical analyses or reviewed discussions, innovative poster presentations, and workshops designed to meet educational needs of



Figure 6. 2017-2018 AP Executive Council. Front row (L to R) David T. Brown, Immediate Past-president, Kenneth A. Malament, President-elect, James C. Taylor, President, and Lisa Lang, Secretary-Treasurer. Back row (L to R) Kent L. Knoernschild, Izchak Barzilay, Carlo Ercoli and John A. Sorensen, Executive Councilors. Vice-president Carol Lefebvre is absent from photograph.

the dental community. Scientific programs often showcase leading-edge technologies, current trends in scientific research, and evidence-based dentistry. During the week-long meeting, ample opportunity is created for fellowship and networking for the exchange of ideas. Fellowship and scholarship remain the 2 foci of the Academy, which is sustained by a commitment to education, research, mentorship, leadership, and service.

The Academy of Prosthodontics membership has now expanded to 150 fellows, consisting of national and international educators, researchers, and clinicians. Dr Alfred Gysi was the Academy's first international honorary fellow, while today there are 17 Academy fellows from countries outside North America. Membership is by invitation, and Academy fellows are predominantly prosthodontists but also include those who have had formal training in oral and maxillofacial surgery, periodontics, endodontics, and research along with engineering, psychology, business and law. This diversity with a common core of prosthodontic education creates both a unique knowledge base and an expanded opportunity for the future. The Academy of Prosthodontics remains the oldest prosthodontic organization in existence and continues to advance the discipline and support the specialty. On May 8-12, 2018, the Academy will celebrate its centennial anniversary and scientific program at its place of origin in Chicago, Illinois, and will be presided by Dr James C. Taylor (Fig. 6).

Seven additional invited editorials will follow "The Emergence and Development of Prosthodontics as a Specialty" in subsequent JPD issues. For additional information visit the Academy of Prosthodontics website at <http://www.academyofprosthodontics.org/>.

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