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### *Invoking the artist in Dentistry*

Dear friends,

Dentistry, a charming profession, has always fascinated people due to its ability to redesign the lost beauty of face. Multiplicity of Dental materials and technology available today has indeed facilitated restoration of smiles to near-natural levels. Many patients seek dental treatment primarily to improve their esthetic and social acceptance. Instinctively, we expect that our treatments enrich their quality of lives.

Ironically we are now witnessing new research, which suggests that improving smiles does not automatically improve confidence levels or self-esteem among patients. It is nothing short of a paradox then that with rapid mechanization, it is the art of Dentistry that seems to be losing out to the science!

If we introspect, the origins of the word '*docere*' for doctor meant 'one who teaches.' Hence it was expected that one who teaches well was a good doctor. At this juncture if we pause and try to remember some of our favorite teachers then we shall realize that more than the awe inspired by a cute face or a stylish dress it was their inherent traits that allured us. Some of those traits included listening to our problems, empathizing and guiding us, keeping no undue expectations from us and being good human beings overall.

Similarly our patients also expect the same traits from us as doctors. Unfortunately we, in our tunneled visions, many-a-times fail to appreciate patients' side of the story and prescribe textbook solutions to them. In other words, we need to understand that no 'one size fits all.' For example, the request of a daily wage earner to extract her grossly decayed tooth is perfectly alright rather than referring her for a Root Canal Treatment that she can neither access nor afford. Likewise well fabricated dentures that do not facilitate mastication or bleaching procedures that leave patients dissatisfied with their appearance are some of the many issues arising due to mismatch between anticipated and realistic expectations.

Bridging these expectations is an aspect of professional lives that, alas, is not taught in Dental schools. The solution only lies in our ability to understand and reflect by falling into patient's shoes. Understanding patients' social and psychological perspective comes from our experiences in life. Like Albert Einstein rightly said:

**“A person who never made a mistake, did not try anything new”**

So it is time to look beyond textbooks and start learning from experiences. Go ahead and experience novelty by making friends who are not of the same profession as yours; read some real life stories of trials and tribulations; invite your neighbor for that meal you always wanted to cook; visit a near-forgotten relative, or simply give more time to your immediate family members. Believe me that they have so much to share on aspects that you and I cannot even imagine. Such experiences will not just enrich you as a better human being but also rejuvenate the lost artist within you.

With best wishes, always...

Guest Editor