



25th edition of the Portuguese Dental Association's Congress

Even in 1963, the year I was born, Bob Dylan wrote in the chorus of the song that was to become a true anthem, "(...) times are changing ..."

They were, of course! Maybe at a more sociologic level, regarding habits and behaviours.

Then, as now, times continue to change...

We are currently experiencing a time of profound changes, levered essentially by globalization, currently in course, the internet and new communication and information technologies, among others.

Bob Dylan's chorus is, therefore, more up to date than ever, possibly more than he could have ever imagined when he wrote it, over 50 years ago.

From trade, finance, economy and of course, the work market, nothing is the same.

Obviously, qualified professions have also been affected by this reality. Dental medicine is one of them.

Every day we are called to respond to challenges such as the growing demand for oral health care, the dentist's role in the future, regulatory requirements and new payment modalities, among others.

Only yesterday, we discussed and reflected upon some of these paths in the Regulation Forum where we had the pleasure to receive some of the most renowned leaders of the profession, worldwide.

The challenges are more than many and no country has a model that addresses the major challenge faced by the health sector today. If, on the one hand, health care expenses continue to rise, on the other, the demands of the population for greater and better care are also increasing. Can health be seen as a common economic activity?

In order to choose paths, an inevitable principle must be fulfilled: obtaining information.

The importance awarded by the Portuguese Dental Association to studies, surveys and opinion polls, is well known. It is a strategic area where we will continue to invest.



Today, I will disclose an extract from yet another study: "Diagnosis of the Dental Professionals in Portugal".

In a way, this study complements the existing Oral Health Barometer, another PDA initiative. Both studies were executed by QSP – Marketing Consulting.

The Oral Health Barometer reflected society's view of oral health and dentists, at several levels. On the other hand, this study, reveals the image that dentists have of themselves and their profession. It will be made public at the end of the year.

I would like to thank in advance all my colleagues for their cooperation in answering this survey. This proves, once again, that dentists participate, accompany their professional association and collaborate with it.

When questioned about what they like most in the profession, 43.7% of dentists referred that through their work, they are contributing to improving the population's health.

Times are changing...

The majority (64.3%) of dentists carry out their activity in one or two practices or clinics, of which 37.3% work in a single practice and 27.0% work in two practices.

In this aspect, the times have also changed...

As for the size of the practices or clinics, in general, the physical facilities in Portugal usually have one consultation room. If we compare this data with the number of dentists, we can verify that even the smallest practices have more than one professional working.

From individual practices to the sharing of resources. Times are changing...

The amenities offered are varied and comprehensive; information on oral health, space for children, wireless...

The old magazines in the waiting rooms are, more and more a sign that times are changing...

Most dental practices offer a wide range of dental services.

And a significant part of these clinics also offer services in other areas of medicine.

A service culture for the consumer, for the patient.

Times are changing.

It should also be noted that dental clinics in shopping centres is considered inappropriate, as it does not give credibility to the provision of this type of care (95.6%).



Among the three most frequently performed clinical treatments, caries treatment, dental scaling (52.7%) and endodontic treatments (41.4%) were the most registered.

Times are changing ... Because we might have thought that the most frequent was dental extractions.

But in spite of everything, in Portugal the healing needs are enormous, as we are all aware. There are times that change slowly.

And this fact, when approaching the end of my intervention, emphasizes the issue of accessibility of a large part of our population to basic oral health care. An issue that PDA considers of the utmost importance; the one that most drives us.

The study carried out by the Nova University, and disseminated last year to the Portuguese society reveals several complementary solutions among themselves. There is no single path.

Let's see:

- *The additional use by the population that uses the NHS of the existing network of private clinics and practices in Portugal, more than 6000;*
- *Enlarging the scope of the dental voucher, a very successful programme that since its implementation has benefited more than 2 million five hundred thousand users;*
- *The establishment of a similar mechanism of agreement / sharing of procedures to the sub convention ADSE;*

Until the insertion of dentists in the NHS is possible.

Here I would like to congratulate the Secretary of State Assistant and of Health for his efforts to carry out the Government's project of inserting in duly equipped public health centres, dentists and dental assistants to care for the population suffering from chronic diseases and also economically disadvantaged patients of the NHS, in public health centres in the Lisbon and Alentejo regions.

I referred before that none of the paths above should be rejected. On the contrary, when considered carefully, there is room for everyone, depending on a set of circumstances duly explained in the study.

What we need and defend are pragmatic solutions that allow all Portuguese people to have access to dental care.

Only this pragmatism will avoid health policy from being irreversibly affected, not by the best solutions or options, but by aspects of ideological or political nature.

We live in very different times...

Times that are changing, but in which no one should be left behind. We are all needed. All of us.



Times in which it is more important than ever that dentists be driven by a higher sense of ethics, responsibility and truth.

Difficult times, but in which we reserve, as dentists, freedom of choice, as educated and trained adults, capable of making decisions.

Decisions that, in a free, democratic, open, plural society, only each one of us can take for ourselves and be responsible for them individually.

In an equally different time, 25 years ago, our Congress was born.

Just as reference, also 25 years ago, the first public website on the internet appeared...

PDA's Congress is a success story.

Of progress. Exceedance. Joy.

Of Quality. Involvement of the profession and dentists.

Teamwork. Of the various PDA teams.

Let's glorify excellence!

We are all to be congratulated for the 25th edition!

Thank you!

Orlando Monteiro da Silva

Porto, November 11th, 2016