Recollections of seasons past and present
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Reflections this time of year may evoke a simulacrum of dental meetings with innovations, such as the presentation of new techniques (revived and modernized from dental cosmos publications) or new-again computerized mechanisms to treat patients.

Perhaps it may evoke the excitement of seeing our kibb and colleagues once again, while laughing over past experiences. Usually, large gatherings of dentistry are destined to place in large, new convention centers. We may recall previous meetings held in large hotels, warmer and more personal, and reminiscent of some personal history.

Now, large dental meetings command large convention halls, acquiring more economic support. These convention centers have different size rooms that are adaptive to different crowds, computerized luxuries that detail all that we need to know without asking questions, and details of where and who will be presenting, and which group is actually meeting and at what time. Still, they are impersonal and all-consuming.

I inquire, while reading the myriad lists of organizations at our meetings, “Where did all of these initials come from?” Societies, study clubs and state organizations — state ones next to national, adjacent to international, with so many initials.

While the daylight disappears earlier, there is a slight coolness in the air, and the excitement of seeing friends grows once again. I think of hugging a classmate, a teacher, a lost colleague, and it brings a smile as a leaf starts to descend.

The article “Alphabet Soup” I had written previously with enthusiastic receptive reception, is being republished in this edition and perhaps will be published annually until the occlusal rift dental meeting inundates our dental organizations — state ones next to national, adjacent to international, with so many initials.

Abbreviations have become confusing. Abbreviations have become a lingo all of its own: Abbreviating is a way, has anyone ever seen a maxim — an implant group, as compared to the ESC, Eastern Society of Cardiology. ESC, European Society of Cardiology. Also, we would know that the AO, a dental fraternity group.

To help ameliorate this confusion I am proposing: Colorful communications.

A dilemma. We now have so many dental groups that we have almost run out of letters to spell our alphabet. As group after group abbreviates its name, we are at a loss to tell one from another without a scoreboard. Either we need a new alphabetical language or more exotic sounding dental organizations with as yet, unused letters.

History relates its alphabet beginnings to Mesopotamia, where early transcribers used grooved lines on a ball, or gourd-like container. These scratches of lines became the beginnings of written communications.

Flashing forward to mobile communications of today, where time pressures have abbreviated words, and we have a lingo all of its own. Abbreviating is a modern necessity.

To begin with, you cannot tweet — under tweeting rules — over a certain number of characters. Also, texting sophistication requires not only abbreviating, but also doing it creatively, to stumped the recipient.

Fortunately, having a college-aged daughter has given me a little heads up in this language. For example, CUL means “see you later” and POS means “parent over shoulder.” Everyone is in a rush — but to where? Tired thumbs? And communication stands in line behind speed.

There is a definite divide, albeit not a sharp one, between the Baby Boomers and the computer generation, sometimes alluded to as “nester.” Whereas Baby Boomers enjoy direct personal communication, nesters prefer computer communication. Abbreviations then become even more important.

We are running out of letters to distinguish the plethora of dental organizations. A rebirth should seem a mean- ing, or a riddle perhaps. The ADA, for example, stands for American Dental Association. But, it could also represent the American Dermatological Academy.

At least the GNVD, representing the largest dental meeting in the U.S., has unique letters in its title and will not be confused with any other group. There is also the ERA mini implant, not to conflict with the ERA in baseball. By the way, has anyone ever seen a maxi implant? Between the AACD, ASDA, AAD and AAO, one wrong initial and you’re in the wrong state or country and have to pay new dues. The ESC, Eastern Society of Cardiology, must not be confused with the ESC, European Society of Cardiology.

The idea of written language is to have unique connotation to words. Abbreviating these words with initials not only obviates the communication, but makes it confusing. Abbreviations have become the teratogen of communication.

To help ameliorate this confusion I am proposing Hoexter’s Index (HI), which will not only speed up communication, but will satisfy tweeters and tweeters alike. I propose that we assign a color to every dental specialty. For example, I suggest burgundy for general practitioner, red for periodontics, green for implants, yellow for oral surgery (and maxillofacial), orange for endodontics, blue for esthetics, black for pathology, gray for dental materials, pink for orthodontics and pedodontics, and brown for prosthetics.

This way, each respective group would be required to use that color in its initials. When publicizing an AO meeting, we would recognize that an AO meeting was for the Academy of Osteointegration, an implant group, as compared to an AO meeting, which would be for Alpha Omega, a dental fraternity group.

Also, we would know that AAP represents the American Academy of Periodontics, which would not be confused with the AAP, or the American Association of Prosthodontics. Unfortunately, unless we have a color chart, we will be just as confused, but it will be much more colorful.

This is only a suggestion, and any thoughts or other solutions would be received and considered for publication as well. There is an obvious problem. Let us communicate and help correct it.

To conclude, Rodney Dangerfield, the famous comedian, once described his son eating alphabet soup that his wife, a horrible cook, had made. The boy separated letters to spell “HELP.” Let’s help our profession abbreviate with colorful understanding. O&C.