The impact of orthodontics on society

What is the impact of orthodontics on society? This question is often addressed to specialties whose goals are, at least in part, aesthetic. We orthodontists are intuitively aware that orthodontic treatment reaches beyond the realm of beauty. A great many patients clearly understand the relevance and scope of orthodontic correction because they enjoy its benefits firsthand in their everyday life.

Cleft patients are among those people. And it is curious to note that Brazil has contributed immensely to the development of techniques and concepts used in the treatment of this pathology since one of the largest and most highly reputed centers in the world for treatment of cleft patients is called "Centrinho" (Little Center), and is located in the city of Bauru, São Paulo State (USP-HRAC). It was there that in the 1970s a team of researchers was challenged to expand their knowledge of orthodontic solutions for people who sought them with serious aesthetic and functional facial impairments. Perhaps as a result of this selection pressure, a classic case of 'professional Darwinism', several great professionals emerged. I'd like to highlight one such example because he is our interviewee in this edition of the Journal: Dr. Leopoldino Capelozza Filho, or simply, Dino, as he is fondly known to all. He was forged in an environment that gave him "relentless conditions to develop a critical spirit and the confidence to ignore dogmas and shift paradigms." These virtues are the hallmarks of his professional life both as a clinician and a professor. His greatest legacy undoubtedly lies in the latter, I mean his contribution to the academic universe. He is one of a handful of teachers who helped transition Brazilian orthodontics from a mere echoer of knowledge to a position of worldwide leadership. All this he accomplished without losing sight of the premise that patients "are my primary goal."

I mentioned above our intuition because it helps us realize the benefits that orthodontics brings to the population. And cleft patients provide us with an obvious touchstone to measure the extent of these benefits. Moreover, the article by Feu and colleagues on indicators of quality of life and their importance in orthodontics further enhances this understanding. By describing and illustrating various dentistry-related indicators of quality of life the authors managed to conveniently sum up the knowledge available on the different ways in which our specialty can impact on people's lives. And the number of people who need orthodontic treatment is huge. To gain an insight into what I mean by that, just read the article by Machado Bittencourt, who evaluated 4776 Brazilian children during the campaign "Prevention is Easier to Handle," conducted in 18 Brazilian states by the Brazilian Association of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics.

Finally, the broad scope of orthodontics can be experienced in a simple and direct manner by observing the figure generated with the words used in this issue of the Journal (Fig 1). The size of each word represents how frequently they appear in the articles. It is remarkable to note the myriad effects that orthodontic treatment can produce in patients.

Enjoy your reading!

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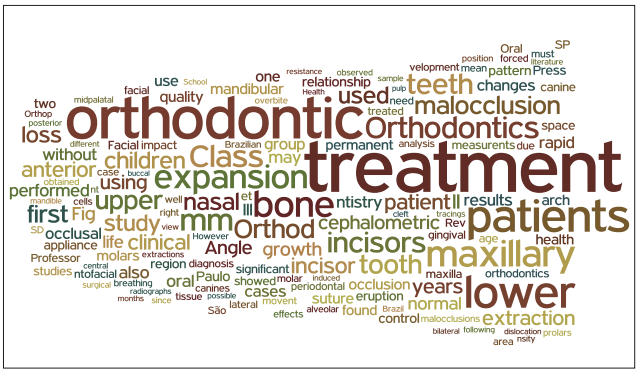

FIGURE 1 - The size of each word depicts the frequency with which each word appears in the articles published in this issue of the Journal. It is remarkable to note the myriad effects that orthodontic treatment can produce in patients.