

At the 2010 meeting of the International Federation of Endodontic Associations (IFEA), I completed my term as Regent for North America and was elected as Chair of the International Education Committee. A previous project of this committee was to identify and train an educator from an emerging country to start a department of endodontics where there was none previously. The first recipient of this project started an endodontic department in Fiji under the direction of Dr. Paul Abbott. I was requested to investigate the status of Endodontics in dental schools in Central Africa.

In East Africa a new dental school has been established in Kenya at Moi University. The first class of 15 students started in 2008. There is no department of Endodontics although the school has established collaboration with Indiana University in the United States.

In West Africa, Nigeria is the most populous country with a population of about 120 million people. Although Nigeria gained independence in 1960, modern dental practice started in 1935. There are now six dental schools in the country graduating about 100 dentists a year. Although there are at least 11 dental schools in Sub-Saharan Africa north of South Africa, there are no departments of Endodontics.

I was able to make contact with Dr. Mbachan Collins Okwen, a dentist who teaches at the University of Benin in Nigeria. Dr. Okwen is keenly interested in Endodontics and, with the permission of his dean, Dr. Daouda Saheeb, he commenced a one year preceptorship program at the University of Texas at Houston (UTH). The objective was to start a department of Endodontics in two schools in Nigeria: the first in the University of Benin and the second in the University of Lagos. The two cities are about three hours apart with the latter in the commercial center of Nigeria – a city of 7 million with a metropolitan area of 15 million people.

Tuition for the preceptorship at the University of Texas at Houston is approximately US\$ 30,000. The IFEA does not have a Foundation and relies on income from its international meeting held every three years. The 2010 meeting in Athens did not generate as much as was expected so the organization was only able to contribute \$20,000. This covered two-thirds of the tuition but not living expenses for Dr. Okwen. The remaining one-third of the tuition was donated by the UTH Department of Endodontics

Dr. Okwen discovered that he has an aunt living in the Houston area and was able to live there for the year, although he would like to help with his relative's expense. He did need money for transportation, food, grooming and books, as well as the rest of his tuition and medical insurance as required by our school. We estimated that Dr. Okwen will need \$30,000 to complete the year in Texas and return to Nigeria. Much of this was covered by loans from friends and relatives.

During his preceptorship, Dr. Okwen travelled to Nigeria to make final arrangements for starting the Department of Endodontics at the University of Benin in Nigeria. During the visit Dr. Okwen met with the Dean of the School of Dentistry University of Benin, the Chief Medical Director University of Benin Teaching Hospital and the Head of Department of Conservative Dentistry, Dr. Matthew Sede. Dr. Okwen also presented a lecture on non-surgical endodontics and regenerative endodontics. All the officials at the University of Benin were in full support of the project. The necessary documentation required to complete the application packet was prepared and a curriculum was designed by Dr. Okwen and approved by the Department of Conservative Dentistry for pre-doctoral endodontics, the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH) has provided about eleven hundred square feet of space for the department, some relevant equipment such as a surgical microscope has been purchased for donation to the department and finally, the University of Benin has purchased two brand new dental chairs to be used by the department.

Dr. Okwen returned to Nigeria in July 2012 to train the faculty, residents and final year students on doing proper, non-surgical endodontics. With the submission of the completed application to the University of Benin Teaching Hospital the new Department of Endodontics and Regenerative Dentistry had a launch date of 1st August 2012.

Through the effort of the countries in IFEA, we have been able to start a Department of Endodontics in Central Africa which we hope will serve as an inspiration to the rest of the dental schools on that continent. Unfortunately, due to the slow economy worldwide, some potential organizations and individuals had to reduce or not fund pledges that they made. With the economy getting better in much of the world we are hoping that country organizations and individuals will help us pay back some of the loans we had to take out and also help fund supplies that are still needed. Please send donations to our treasurer and specify that it is for "The Nigeria Fund".