

# The Power of The Mouth

by Dr. Dana Colson

As time moves forward and wisdom accumulates within us on a daily basis, I am continually reinforced on how fortunate I am to have passion about my work.

From age 8, one of my greatest fears was the dentist. I quivered inside when the dentist hovered over a tooth, looking for a cavity. A sigh of relief was felt when he flipped to other teeth, knowing there wasn't a chance that "I might need work done". I envisioned a needle 3 feet long and 1 inch wide that would "bore" into my body, and someone would do something barbaric to my teeth with all those "weird" instruments. My mother always said to be quiet and behave, so I knew regardless of what happened to me, I must be passive. Being a victim was not an empowering feeling. I thought dentists were sadistic, mean people who wanted to hurt others.

By the age of 16, I felt that I had a goal larger than just a professional job. At age 20, a school acquaintance told me about seeing different toothbrushes available as well as nitrous oxide at the University of Toronto dental school open house. With this one sentence, I decided I didn't know anything about dentistry and it was my responsibility to "check it out". I entered Dental School to overcome my own fears and to help others with dentistry.

At the admissions counter of the dental faculty I asked what one could do beyond having a private practice on the 40th floor and becoming alcoholic? The lady stared at me, stuttered and said, "Well, there is community dentistry". From the balcony, where we stood, she showed me the clinic one floor below. I saw a black and white tiled floor with 125 dental chairs with belt-

driven hand pieces. This did nothing to move my thought process ahead. Regardless, I wrote the entrance exams and was accepted. I knew that no matter what happened, I would complete this doctorate.

In the first year I was amazed at the instruments given to us for our lab work, including a paint scraper and hand saw! The upside was seeing, in lectures, how the mouth reflected the health of the body. This was what fascinated me for many years during and following dental school.

I overcame my own paranoia by learning there was an incredibly well developed science and protocol in treatment of teeth. When it was necessary for me to have my first filling, the fear was gone. I was determined to take this learning to overcome fears into my dental practice, to help others with the same concerns.

Over the years much learning occurred and I love dentistry, incorporating behavioural and alternative modalities into my general practice. I have learned how powerful the mouth is, being the gateway to our inner temple, and the importance of feeling good about our smile. If we can open up, feel happy and unashamed about our mouths, we can open up ourselves.

New technologies include tooth lasers, so no more drilling. Strong white fillings are now used with strict protocol for removing silver-mercury ones. Intra-oral cameras allow us to see what's really happening, along with muscle relaxing exercises, facial aerobics, acupuncture and cranial sacral. Scientific advances have moved dentistry into a new era. I am so happy to be part of this and to share it with others!!

