

Connect with the world...join the World Federation of Orthodontists

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In less than a year, student membership in the World Federation of Orthodontists (WFO) has nearly doubled. Today, over 1000 postgraduate orthodontic students from 60 countries are WFO members. Hoping to take advantage of this enthusiasm, the WFO Executive Committee has launched a membership promotion to encourage students to join the WFO by suspending the payment of dues until the 2015 International Orthodontic Congress (IOC) in London.

The fact that young people want to join any organization these days seems surprising to some, in the light of the aging membership of Rotary Clubs and other established organizations throughout the world. Perhaps a glance at the history of the WFO and its original objectives will shed new light on this surge of activity.

The First International Congress of Orthodontia (now IOC) was held in 1926. It was spearheaded by Dr William C. Fisher, President of the American Society of Orthodontists at that time, but was organized and held without a united supporting organization. The Second IOC was held in London in 1931, organized by the British Society of Orthodontists. Both congresses were successful, and discussions after these events led to planning for the Third IOC to be held in Montreal, Canada, in 1938. However, the combination of world economic conditions and the untimely death of Dr Fisher led to cancellation of those plans. World events that followed further delayed subsequent meetings. The Third IOC was finally held in London in 1973.

Resurrection of the idea of a world organization with its own membership structure can be traced to a board of directors meeting of the Midwestern Society of Orthodontists in 1989. Dr John Byrne, a Chicago orthodontist, wondered why it had been such a long time since an international orthodontic meeting had been held. The Midwestern Society of Orthodontists presented a resolution to the AAO House of Delegates requesting the AAO to designate its annual session in 1995 as the Fourth

IOC. Dr William H. DeKock, a member of the Midwestern Society of Orthodontists, would be president of the AAO that year. The AAO House of Delegates accepted the concept, and the Board of Trustees assigned the responsibility of organizing the Fourth IOC to Dr DeKock.

Dr DeKock recognized immediately that for the Fourth IOC to be successful, orthodontic societies from around the world would need to participate and become stakeholders. He appointed Dr Lee W. Graber as general chairman and Drs William Thompson and Donald Woodside as program chairmen of the AAO's 95th Annual Session to be held in San Francisco. An international advisory committee with members from 4 continents was also appointed. After investigating an international oral surgery organization, Dr DeKock developed and wrote the first draft of the bylaws of the WFO. These bylaws were based on the strengths of already existing national orthodontic societies throughout the world. They also took into consideration the unique culture of the orthodontic specialty and its participating orthodontists.

The AAO Board of Trustees recognized that for many years there had been problems with its international membership category because it is difficult to verify the qualifications of prospective members outside the United States and Canada. The concept that was developed for the WFO was based on the fact that the national and regional orthodontic societies throughout the world would know who their orthodontic specialist members are and would be willing to validate those credentials for a doctor to become a fellow of the WFO. There was 1 problem, however: there was no list of recognized orthodontic societies in the world. So, Dr DeKock contacted the Fédération Dentaire Internationale and asked it for a list of dental societies throughout the world. These dental societies were contacted and asked for the names and addresses of the orthodontic societies in their respective countries. Dr DeKock then contacted the orthodontic societies one by one; he faxed to them a copy of his draft of the WFO bylaws and asked whether they would join with the AAO in San Francisco in 1995 to form the WFO. Sixty-eight national and regional orthodontic societies from 62 countries joined with the AAO

to sign the charter of the WFO at the Herbst Theatre in San Francisco on May 15, 1995. Today, 111 societies have been recognized.

The purpose of the WFO ever since its formation has been to advance the art and science of orthodontics throughout the world by fulfilling these objectives:

1. Encourage high standards in orthodontics throughout the world.
2. Encourage and assist in the formation of national associations and societies of orthodontists when requested.
3. Encourage and assist in the formation of national and regional certifying boards in the field of orthodontics when requested.
4. Promote orthodontic research.
5. Disseminate scientific information.
6. Promote desirable standards of training and certification for orthodontists.
7. Organize the IOC to be held at least once every 5 years.

The WFO Educational Guidelines were developed after an extensive review of orthodontic educational programs around the world. This review was completed by a distinguished task force composed of academicians from several continents and led by former WFO president Professor A. E. Athanasiou, chairman of the Orthodontic Department at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. The guidelines are intended to serve as a guide to institutions that want to develop new programs and for those that wish to have a standard against which to measure their current offerings. The guidelines provide specific direction for universally recognized quality orthodontic specialty training.

A total of 18 orthodontic certifying boards now serve the membership of the WFO, with most of these coming into existence since 2005. They are an excellent resource for information regarding the value of a board-certification process. It is expected that the guidelines will encourage the establishment of new certifying boards in orthodontics. The WFO hopes that existing certifying boards will wish to compare their current guidelines and procedures with those recommended by the WFO.

The WFO now has over 9000 members and expects a surge in membership as we approach the next IOC, to be held in London, September 27-30, 2015. Most local

8TH INTERNATIONAL ORTHODONTIC CONGRESS

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orthodontic societies that have spawned these orthodontists recognize the WFO as the only fully established organization dedicated to represent them on the world stage. Every 5 years, the members of these organizations are asked to elect new doctors to represent their interests as they convene during the next IOC. If you are not already a member, now is the time to act. For \$40 a year, members receive the *WFO Gazette* and the newly formatted online version of the *Journal of the WFO* (an Elsevier publication), and are invited to participate in future meetings, including those scheduled for London in 2015 and Japan in 2020.

Take advantage now of this offer by viewing the Web site at www.wfo.org or by contacting Terri Wise at twise@aaortho.org. A uniform 1-page application is available to download for those residing outside the United States and Canada who also want to become international members of the AAO.