

## Coming home

The ruling body of the International College of Dentists is meeting in Dublin in October, and the College's international President, Dr Joe Kenneally, has a strong Irish connection.

Dr Joseph Kenneally is many things. He is a general dental practitioner in the town of Biddeford in the state of Maine in the United States of America. He is a former Vice President of the American Dental Association. He's a family man with adult children. He is also the 2015 President of the International College of Dentists (ICD or just College). With 12,000 members, it is the largest and oldest honorary society of dentists in the world. And it is in his role with the ICD that Joe believes that his life, and his family story, will come full circle in October of this year. He will come to Ireland to preside over a global meeting of his profession in the country that his grandfather, a blacksmith, left in the early part of the last century. We in Ireland sometimes underestimate the emotional ties of the diaspora to our country. We shouldn't. Dr Joe Kenneally is a man who has achieved a great deal in his life and it is evident from talking to him that it means a great deal to him to return to Ireland as President of the ICD.



College, the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland, and the Shelbourne Hotel. The key social event is the Gala Dinner in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham on Saturday October 10.

Dr Kenneally feels that dentistry is in a period of strong growth and development in the advanced nations of the world. He cites the advent of electronic technology as having a transforming effect on dental surgeries, with the ability to use digital technology to see images in three dimensions as a huge help to dentists.

In the less developed areas of the world, there is a drive to raise standards and get care to people. The ICD has a strong humanitarian role and often partners with local organisations to get oral healthcare to places where no such care has previously existed.

### ICD in Dublin

Joe Kenneally comes to Dublin with an agenda – the agreement and adoption of a strategic plan for the future of the ICD. It's a big ask for an organisation that is so multicultural. "Some of our members place great emphasis on leadership; others on the honour; and others again on our humanitarian work. It's a challenge to get all of them to agree to a single strategic plan," says Joe. However, the underlying drive is for growth. The ICD currently has about 12,000 fellows. Joe believes that the top 2% of dentists in the world should be members; so there is room to grow to about 72,000 members globally. The ICD is a huge organisation, being divided into regions across the world. The European Section is currently headed by well-known Irish dentist Dr Tom Feeney (a former member of the Editorial Board of the *Journal*) and it was Tom who headed the drive to bring the ICD event to Ireland. In fact, it consists of both the 60th Annual Meeting of the European Section of the ICD, and the annual meeting of the International Council of the College. The formal meetings take place at the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, Trinity

### Joe's journey

Joe Kenneally is a second-generation Irish American. His grandfather was a blacksmith who emigrated to the United States from Tipperary. With the classic determination of hard working people, Joe's dad became a Professor in Arts



ICD International President-Elect for 2016 Dr Phillip Dowell of the UK (left) with Dr Lisa Howard and Dr Joe Kenneally.



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and the Humanities in a New England college. His uncle, however, was a dentist and guided Joe into the profession. As with most professions in the USA, dentistry is a postgraduate qualification. Joe studied medical biology for his primary degree at the same college where his father taught, and then proceeded to the Dental School at Tuft's University in Boston. Qualifying in the early 1980s, he went to work in a dental practice for two years. He then set up his own practice in Biddeford, Maine, the very same coastal town where his uncle was in practice. There was, he says, never any sense of competition between them – rather his uncle continued to encourage him.

### Fluoridation

Joe was quickly invited to join the Rotary Club in Biddeford and each new Rotarian is asked to make a presentation. Joe decided to make his on the benefits to oral health of community water fluoridation. He must have made an impression because he was then asked to chair a committee to lobby for fluoridation of the drinking water in the Biddeford area. Despite some naysayers telling him that he would not succeed, the population of the area voted 70:30 in favour of fluoridation and the water has been fluoridated at a rate of 0.8ppm ever since. Joe has been a lifelong advocate of water fluoridation as a result. He is familiar with the peer-reviewed science, but the most gratifying part for him is his own anecdotal observation in his practice. "Thirty years ago we were seeing high levels of decay and caries in almost all adolescents in Biddeford. Nowadays it is unusual if our children need restorations of any type. A lot of our children are making it into adulthood without ever having a restoration. That's a big change just in my lifetime and I believe that fluoride has had a significant positive impact on the oral health of our population."

### Leadership

The role that Joe played in promoting the fluoridation of water in his area identified him as a dentist with leadership skills. He went on to become President of the Maine Dental Association, and later, Vice President nationally of the American Dental Association. In was in this capacity with the ADA that

### Prestigious College

The International College of Dentists (ICD) is the world's oldest and largest honorary society for dentists. Conceived in 1920, the College currently has over 12,000 members, in 122 countries, who have been awarded the title of Fellow in the ICD.

Fellowship in the College is extended by invitation only. A nominated dentist must pass a rigorous, peer review process leading to the recognition of the individual's "outstanding professional achievement, meritorious service and dedication to the continued progress of dentistry for the benefit of humankind." All members of the College, regardless of their native language or country of residence, adhere to one universal motto, 'Recognising service and the opportunity to serve'.

The International Council is ICD's ruling body for the worldwide membership and Sections. The 40 members of the Council include the International Officers and Councillors who represent ICD's Sections and Regions. The International Council meets annually to set policy directives for the College worldwide. The members of the Council direct the growth and the spread of influence of the ICD globally. The Secretary General and staff of the Council Office are responsible for

### 'How to volunteer' workshop

The ICD 2015 Conference in Dublin will include a public workshop on dental professionals volunteering their services. The three-hour course is open to both conference and non-conference delegates and is designed for dentists, dental hygienists, other dental professionals, and other interested parties who want to learn more about volunteering. Topics include the nature of volunteer activities, cross-cultural issues, comparison of service and teaching projects, how to get started either at home or abroad, and where to find these volunteer opportunities. There will be ample time for interaction with the presenters and experienced members of the audience. It will also be useful for those with some volunteering experience looking for new ideas or just validation of what they are doing.

The course will take place in the DDUH from 9.00am to 12 noon on Saturday, October 10. It is open for attendance, free of charge, but those intending to attend need to register in advance. See [www.icd2015.ie](http://www.icd2015.ie).

visited Ireland for the first time in 1997 to attend the official opening of the new facilities at the Dublin Dental University Hospital. Around that time also, a former Professor of his from Tuft's University, Vangel Zissi, invited him to become a Fellow of the International College of Dentists. He went on to become Deputy Regent of the ICD for Maine where he regularly brought in new members to the College. This resulted in him becoming the Distinguished Deputy Regent in the USA in 2002. In 2005, his old mentor Vangel came back to him saying that he wanted to inject some new blood onto the International Council (the ruling body) of the ICD and asking Joe to step forward. Joe did this and became even more active in the College, culminating in his unopposed election as International President of the College for 2015.

And so, life comes full circle. The International President of the International College of Dentists attends his conference in Dublin and has a sense of coming home. We have every reason to be very proud of our diaspora – and to welcome them home.



Dr Joe Kenneally, ICD International President, with Dr Tom Feeney, President of the European Section.

implementing the directives and policies of the Council. There are 15 Sections of the ICD, which are organised regionally. Europe is Section V and the current President of the European Section is Dr Tom Feeney.