I normally reflect at this stage of the year that time has accelerated on me again, that Christmas is somehow looming but it can be only six months or so since the last one. That is certainly not the case for me this year. Einstein asserted that relative time slows for an observer approaching the speed of light, but it seems to me, over the last few months, that relative time can also slow if an observer experiences a number of major events in rapid sequence.

People in my part of the world have lived through a major earthquake. They have had to cope with the debilitating effects of a major rebuild while living with repeated aftershocks. We have benefited of course from the high building standards and support infrastructure of a first-world economy – there was no loss of life. We are in a fortunate position compared to the disastrous situation in Haiti at present, despite the two earthquake events being of a similar order of magnitude. Christchurch and Canterbury are well and truly open for business, but it will be years before things get back to normal for many people.

As I write this, a small mining town on the other side of the Southern Alps is having to come to terms with a series of catastrophic explosions in a coal mine. Twenty-nine miners are assumed to have perished, despite some desperate efforts to rescue them. There is speculation that the mine may never re-open, nor the bodies recovered. What a truly devastating, uncertain future for families and a small community at Pike River.

Overlying these two events has been a severe recession which has seen a number of small businesses collapse, and a major, locally-based finance company fail. It’s been a hell of a few months.
So I hope you understand that this is a slightly more sober column than normal, and that I am looking forward to seeing the back of 2010. Part of the human condition is the presence of hope, which Christmas offers, and the chance of renewal and improvement, which the New Year promises.

I’ve been privileged to act as Regent of this section of the ADI over the last four years, and I am looking forward to meeting many of you again at our Convocation in Brisbane in March. Roll on 2011!

Mark Goodhew

### ADI Fellows In the Field - Equal Health - Timor Leste

There are many initiatives that Fellows of the Academy are involved in both domestically and in various overseas locations. The Australasian section reaches out to many countries in our region that do not enjoy the relative prosperity of Australia and New Zealand. One of the poorest countries in the world, and a close neighbour, is East Timor (Timor Leste). A project has begun this year, run by Equal Health Inc: Australian Health Professionals, Overseas Aid Fund.

The immediate history of East Timor is tumultuous and marked by international involvement in trying to assist in stabilising the fledgling nation. Currently Australia and New Zealand police and armed forces, along with United Nations personnel from a myriad of countries are deployed in a very visible presence to ensure the safety and continued stability of the democratic process. In 2010 this has resulted in a place that is safe to visit with a stable government and developing economy. The prospect of oil and gas income from the Timor Gap fields gives hope for an era of improving economic conditions.

That future is of course still to arrive and in the present moment. In this country of just over one million people, the infant and maternal mortality rates are amongst the highest in the world. This means that right now — and for at least the next five years — it is expected that the East Timorese government will, quite correctly, worry mostly about babies and mothers dying and very little about teeth. Priorities are necessary after all. This is where the Fellows of the Academy can help.

What our East Timorese colleagues need, and ask for, is to have assistance in areas that are off their nation’s priority list for now. Clinical help, mentorship and education of the few existing personnel are what the Australasian Section can offer. We can offer a programme that has a finite life, a real outcome on the ground and a catalyst for change at all levels. They need our help and are asking directly for it. Two weeks in East Timor, or even one week, has the potential to improve many lives and make changes that will have many positive outcomes. This is one of those moments in time when we can make a significant and lasting difference.

The structure and logistics are set up. The aims of the project are clear. We have the ideal partner “on the ground”. We work with Clinic Café Timor (CCT), the health
care division of Cooperativa Café Timor, a member owned coffee processing and marketing cooperative. But to make a real difference requires real people to volunteer. Can you imagine yourself spending one or two weeks in East Timor?

Equal Health will arrange travel via Darwin or Bali for a one or two week period that fits with your schedule. Usually the Equal Health teams will be small and consist of a dentist and an assistant (nurse, hygienist or therapist). The field work is in the countryside at CCT clinics. Volunteers will be working alongside the East Timorese team — helping in every way useful. Accommodation, translators, transport and meals are organised by Equal Health and CCT.

The East Timor rural districts have mountainous terrain with treacherous roads and incredibly beautiful scenery. The cool mountain air, coffee jungles and the camaraderie of a volunteer outreach in a unique environment - helping are warm, friendly people in real need. Can you see yourself there?

Simon Shanahan
Chair, Equal Health Inc; Australian Health Professionals, Overseas Aid Fund.
info@equalhealth.com.org

Across the Tasman

The only item of news I have about NZ Fellows is that at the 2010 General Session of the IADR held in Barcelona, Spain, Murray Thomson was awarded the H. Trendley Dean Memorial Award. This award recognises meritorious research in epidemiology and public health. The Section would like to congratulate Murray on this outstanding achievement.

Otherwise NZ sport is doing well with good results against our neighbours in rugby league, netball and rugby and the All Blacks have taken the Tri nations and Bledisloe Cup and looking set to get another grand slam with the current tour of the UK.

Karl Lyons

Submissions from International Contacts

From Dr Vladimir Sadovski, Regent for the Eastern European Section of ADI

Military Dentists of the Ukraine give charitable treatment to over 100 Veterans with surgical, implant and prosthetic needs.
Editor's Notes

Volunteers Always Needed

Without a doubt the recent tragedies in New Zealand with the mine accident at Pike River, and now in Australia with extensive floods in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, remind us how precious life is. The ADI extends to anyone who has been personally affected by these disasters our heartfelt sympathy and commiserations.

Life is precious, but I would like all of us to consider the quality of the lives of others in many countries around the world; particularly consider those who struggle in their lives, on a day to day basis. Unfortunately in countries less fortunate than our own, all manner of dental disease is rampant.

I would like to invite any ADI Fellows, who have not previously thought about being a volunteer, to consider that 2011 will be a year to offer assistance. Not all volunteers necessarily go overseas; many dental programmes operate in Australia. Additionally all programmes need fundraising; your expertise may be in finding the dollars to assist in aid programmes.

Remembering the ADI Objectives:

*The Academy is an Organisation devoted to the advancement of dentistry throughout the world and the improvement of oral health for the citizens of every nation.*

Contact the ADI and offer your expertise to the many projects in Australia and overseas. Email Simon Shanahan sshananas@iinet.net.au.

We are in the process of investigating the dissemination of ADI news electronically. I would urge you to review your email and current addresses and if either or both have changed in the last 6 months, please contact me at adi.news@yahoo.com.au.

John Davies, Editor

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For Your Diary

**ADI (Australasian Section) Convocation & Dinner**
Tuesday 29th March 2011
4.30pm Convocation
7pm for 7.30pm Dinner
The Queensland Club
19 George St, Brisbane
Contact: Dr Eddie Street
Email: e.street@bigpond.com

34th Australian Dental Congress
30th March - 3rd April 2011
Brisbane, Queensland
Web: www.adc2011.com
Registration Enquiries: 61 7 3854 1611
Email: adc2011@ozaccom.com.au

Federation Dentaire Internationale (FDI)
14th - 17th September 2011
Mexico City, Mexico
Incorporating ADI Convocation
Web: www.fdiworldental.org

American Dental Association Annual Session
10th - 13th October 2011
Las Vegas, Nevada
Incorporating ADI Convocation
Web: www.ada.org

It would be appreciated if letters, articles, photos etc are sent in high resolution, electronic format or TIFF (cmyk) where possible. We look forward to hearing from you.

Special thanks are due to Henry Schein Halas and Medfin for their generous sponsorship of this Newsletter and Brenda Hughes for her publishing skills.