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THE EDITOR'S CORNER

The 2013 JCO Orthodontic Practice Study

In my last introduction to the biennial JCO Orthodontic Practice Study (October 2011), I wrote about how technology had affected the way orthodontics is practiced in the United States. Now, our survey itself has been changed by the latest developments in software and online programming. This is the first year in which we have collected all data by means of the Internet, using SurveyMonkey.com.

Although we needed to send several reminders to get enough clinicians to finish their surveys, we ended up with a reasonable number of responses, and the answers seemed more accurate and easier to tabulate than our paper questionnaires had been in the past. This was still a lengthy exercise to complete, however, and we'd like to thank the several hundred orthodontists who participated. Without them, we would not have been able to continue our reporting of more than three decades of trends in the economics and administration of U.S. practices.

It might be expected that respondents to an online survey would be somewhat different from practitioners who had responded to our mailed questionnaires over the years. Indeed, the results show this to be a slightly younger sample, with even more computer acumen. But because the key figures do align logically with recent trends, we are confident in reporting the outcome of the 2013 Study in a three-part series of articles beginning this month.

The good news is that the economic doldrums of the past four years seem to have been shaken off by American orthodontists. Our tabulations show 22% increases in both median gross income and median case starts—two of the crucial indicators of orthodontic financial health—over the 2011 Study. In the next two issues, we'll look at factors that appear to be associated with success in terms of net income and practice growth.

As usual, the complete Practice Study tables will eventually be posted in our Online Archive at www.jco-online.com, where they will be available to any current JCO subscriber. Even if you didn't participate this year, you can use the questionnaire to track your own practice data and improve your management procedures and profitability. DSV