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THE EDITOR'S CORNER

Everything's Coming Up Roses

Orthodontists are riding a wave of prosperity of the economy, fertility of the population, and a steady exuberance of consumer confidence. This is reflected in the results of the 1997 JCO Orthodontic Practice Study of the economics and administration of orthodontic practices.

What is more, the trends that we are seeing this year are likely to continue. The annual number of births has stood at 4 million for the past several years, and the effect of this bulge in the birth rate will be good news for orthodontists for many years into the future, because the potential orthodontic patients for the next decade or more have already been born. Not only that, but the potential for treating the baby boomers who are now reaching middle age has not been fully tapped. The general economy shows no signs of slackening, perhaps due to the strength of U.S. business in a global economy. In the midst of an economic euphoria, there are as yet no signs of inflation.

In this year's Practice Study, another significant increase in case starts is accompanied by an echoing increase in net income. In spite of a large rise in expenses, the overhead rate has remained steady. Although there are some interesting developments in the administrative aspects of orthodontic practice, including a disturbing increase in the number of practices treating managed-care patients, one would have to look hard to find negatives in the current report.

We want to thank the many orthodontists who took the time to respond to the Study questionnaire. Once again, as promised, the most important results will be published in a series of three articles, beginning with this issue.

ELG