A reflection on the MRACDS experience by a recent participant. Robert Saltmiras 19.11.13

As Principal of a large practice (some 20 staff including 5-6 providers) my life was certainly busy. Apart from a full time clinical load my world included mentoring clinicians, developing leaders, HR, strategic business planning and the post-GFC scrutiny needed to stay afloat! You may say much of that should be delegated – it was – but as team leader the responsibility of bringing direction to that management team never changes.

Being the ‘top of the food chain’ in your own small world can be fun, but strangely also a lonely role. I found myself with an increasing sense of clinical ‘flatline’ - I wasn’t growing & wasn’t enjoying doing ‘the same old thing’ clinically that I’d been doing for many years. Furthermore, while I had undertaken many hours of CPD as a graduate there was the sense that I had nothing to show for it - like I had paid for at least a Master’s worth of education over that 30 year period with no real award or recognition. And to be honest, when you are over busy, it is much easier to come home & ‘crash’ rather than read journals – I needed something to get me off my couch!

As a ‘remote’ practitioner I felt there was little opportunity to get the input I was starting to crave. James Cook University – our local - is a great institution, but their dental faculty is five hours away and offers little at the post grad level. I started researching further options but there was virtually no award that I could complete either externally or part-time remotely that articulated well with what did daily.

When I explored the MRACDS though, I was pleasantly surprised. The college gave clear guidance for self-directed study, deadlines and set goals. It promised mentoring, connectedness and the dynamic of pushing me to both formally write up cases and prepare for a broad suite of exams, including a gruelling Viva. So I started.

Interestingly some secondary benefits emerged. As part of my preparation I started casual tutoring in general undergrad anatomy (Med, Physio, OT etc 3 hours / week). That along with the MRACDS activities created a snowball of journal addiction which continues to date. It’s not that dentistry was ever narrow and uninteresting – it’s just that I had become narrow and uninteresting! MRACDS was the kickstart I needed.

Over the past few years Universities have sought to deliver more flexible education packages. Some of these may well suit many of us, but what the MRACDS offers is a broad suite of disciplines that covers every area of practice – perfectly tailored to the practicing GDP and at a fraction of the cost of an online Master’s. Furthermore, it is realistically achievable while in practice – I undertook it while working 5-6 days per week as well as concurrently completing a part time MBA.

So if you’re that dentist in practice looking for an extra level of challenge and guidance, I encourage you to take a serious look at the MRACDS and allow yourself to be stretched!