



Ageing gracefully

When a principal dentist decides to retire, there are various strategies to make the transition run smoothly. By **Kerryn Ramsey**

One of the biggest decisions in your life is retiring. While it may be tempting to sell out and move to the country, it's not always that simple. Many dentists prefer to disengage slowly from their practice instead of quitting cold turkey. This gives them a chance to become accustomed to the retirement lifestyle while an associate dentist can take on more responsibility as they work towards a complete takeover. Dropping from full-time employment to just a few days a week can certainly make the process less stressful for all concerned.

While it sounds simple, there are complications. Is it time to bring in a partner who will eventually take over the whole practice? Is it easier to sell the practice to a corporation? Can the retiring dentist still work for a set number of days once the practice is sold?

Dr Paul Nichols, a 63-year-old dentist, sold his solo practice, CBD Dental Care in Sydney's CBD, to Dental Corporation (DC)

six years ago with a five-year contract to manage the practice then retire. Last year, he had the opportunity to 'walk away', and leave the surgery to Dental Corp. Instead, he merged his practice with another DC practice, Sydney Dental Surgeons, in the same building, and now works just one or two days a week as an associate.

"The merger was a wonderful move for both dentist and patients, as the four dentists all have special interests and skills—from implants to surgery and cosmetics—so most patients can be managed in-house," explains Dr Nichols. Also, the practice's two hygienists have relieved Dr Nichols of the "onerous oral hygiene duties", freeing up his time to enable semi-retirement and to focus on his interest in dento-legal reporting.

Semi-retirement and empty-nester status has prompted a huge sea change for Dr Nichols and his wife, Kerryanne. They have moved from a six-bedroom home to a two-bedroom semi on the beachfront in Manly. This enables the dentist to focus on his other interests, surf-ski training and racing [he is a member of the Surf Club at Palm Beach], as well as travel to see their

