



TENNESSEE

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2022 VOLUME 28, ISSUE 6

DENTAL

ASSOCIATION NEWS

TNDENTALASSOCIATION.ORG

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RETAINING YOUR DENTAL STAFF THROUGH THE GREAT RESIGNATION

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///// Bimonthly news and information for TDA members





BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

OCTOBER 1, 2022



NOVEMBER 2022 VOLUME 28, ISSUE 6

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The TDA Board of Trustees met on October 1, 2022 in person at the TDA Executive Office.

Actions of the Board:

- Voted to provide \$10,000 to the Massachusetts Ballot Initiative and match contributions made by Tennessee dentists up to an additional \$10,000. The Massachusetts Ballot Initiative would require dental insurers to spend at least 83% of premiums on dental care.
- Accepted Patterson Hardee Ballentine CPAs' audit reports of the TDA General Account, TDA Relief Fund, Tennessee Dental PAC, and TDA Foundation for the year ending June 30, 2022, which provided an unqualified report with no issues.
- Approved the following for recommendation to the state for Board of Dentistry member positions: Middle Tennessee – Dr. Jason Tabor, Dr. Chad Edwards, Dr. Matt Gorham III, Dr. Pam Chamberland, Dr. Joseph Britton; West Tennessee – Dr. Steven Zambrano, Dr. Scott Edwards, Dr. Chuck Keltner, Dr. Mike King.
- Clarified wording in Board of Trustees Policy Manual that trustees are elected by the components and that a conflict-of-interest statement be presented by candidates before election.
- Approved a new TDA mission statement: "The TDA's mission is to help dentists succeed and support the advancement of the health of the public."
- Approved a new Strategic Plan 2023-2025.
- Approved the Executive Committee action to replace the TDA building's HVAC system.
- Voted to have the 2023 House of Delegates and Reference Committee in person in conjunction with the Music City Dental Conference.
- Appointed the Executive Committee to study streamlining the Annual Session Committee and consider options for overall continuing education oversight, which was lost when the Council on Scientific Programs and Continuing Education was retired.
- Approved cancellation of the TSI endorsement program.
- Create a task force to study changing council and committee appointments from geography-based to interest/skill based to remove barriers in TDA leadership.



welcome MEMBERS!

THE TENNESSEE DENTAL ASSOCIATION
WELCOMES THE FOLLOWING DENTISTS
AS OUR NEW AND REINSTATED MEMBERS.

We are excited that you have chosen to make the ADA, the TDA and your local components part of your journey. By being part of the ADA community, you've made the choice to power the dental profession.

We're working to bring you useful resources that can help you balance your patients, your practice, and your life. From the latest clinical guidelines to financial management tools like insurance and retirement plans, you'll find what you need to keep your work and life on track.

If there is anything, we can do to enhance your membership experience, call us at 615.628.0208 or email membership@tndentalassociation.org.



Second District Dental Society

Holly Bishop
Baxter Jones

Chattanooga Area Dental Society

Vincent Chiappone
Ciara Wilke
Sushil Pakhrin

Fourth District Dental Society

Sean Hwang
Krishna Gorantla
Hunter Brooks

Nashville Dental Society

Trent Shaw
Bradley Beisiegel
Esther Schara
Josh Wilhelm
Kelsey Korb
Fabian Fuller II
Eiriny Meshreky
Joshua Zarabi
Benjamin Van Ess
Ian Stewart
Robert Hardell
Quantez Freeman

Sixth District Dental Society

Matthew Vaughn

Eighth District Dental Society

Brandie White

Memphis Dental Society

Marie Walsh
Adam Randazzo



TDA EXECUTIVE OFFICE CLOSED FOR THE HOLIDAYS

The TDA Executive Office will close Thursday, November 24 and Friday, November 25 for the Thanksgiving holiday. The office will also close Friday, December 23, Monday, December 26 and Friday, December 30. Normal operations resume January 2, 2023.

The TDA staff wishes everyone a happy and safe Holiday Season.



ARE YOU RECEIVING EMAILS FROM THE TDA?

MEMBER EMAIL ADDRESS UPDATE

If you have unsubscribed to TDA emails in the past you may be missing important information from the TDA and the ADA. Each week the TDA issues a news bulletin with numerous alerts to keep members informed of the latest updates at the local, state, and national level.

If you have not received emails from the TDA, please make sure to check your spam or junk mail folder and mark tda@tndentalassociation.org as a safe sender. To be included in the mailing list or to update your email address please email us at tda@tndentalassociation.org.



In Memoriam

The TDA honors the memory and passing of the following members:

Dr. Jack Bisno

Dr. Bisno was a member of the American Dental Association, the Tennessee Dental Association and the Memphis Dental Society.

Dr. Zachary Carden

Dr. Carden served as president of the Tennessee Dental Association in 2009-10. He served in many roles at the TDA including as Scientific Editor for the Journal of the Tennessee Dental Association. In 2021, he was awarded with the Dr. Jack Wells Memorial Dedication to Dentistry Award, the highest recognition from the Association. Dr. Carden was a member of the American Dental Association, the Tennessee Dental Association, and the Chattanooga Area Dental Society.

Dr. Oliver Rutherford Jr.

Dr. Rutherford was a member of the American Dental Association, the Tennessee Dental Association and the Nashville Dental Society.

Dr. John F. Love

Dr. Love was a member of the American Dental Association, the Tennessee Dental Association, and the Second District Dental Society.

NUMBERS TO KNOW

American Dental Association
800-621-8099 or 312-440-2500

Tennessee Board of Dentistry
615-532-5073

Tennessee Department of Health
615-741-301

Tennessee Dental Association
615-628-0208 | Fax: 615-628-0214
tda@tndentalassociation.org

STAFFED COMPONENT SOCIETIES

First District Dental Society
Executive Secretary: Brooke Bailey
423-552-0222
firstdistrictdental@gmail.com

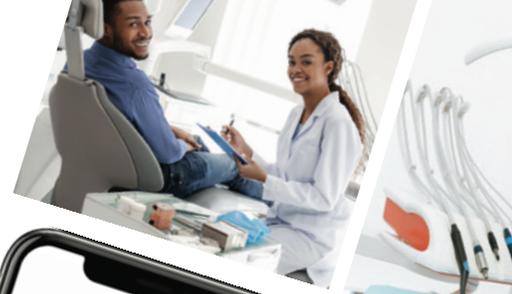
Second District Dental Society
Executive Director: Ally Rhodes
sddsoffice@gmail.com

Chattanooga Area Dental Society
Executive Director: Lacey Heftka
423-886-9191
Info@ChattAreaDent.com

Nashville Dental Society
Executive Director: Kristen Stewart
615-628-3300
director@nashvilledental.org

Eighth District Dental Society
Executive Secretary: Ruby Batson
931-245-3333

Memphis Dental Society
Executive Director: Delaney Williams
901-682-4928
dwilliams@memphisdentalsociety.org



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FEBRUARY IS NATIONAL CHILDREN'S DENTAL HEALTH MONTH

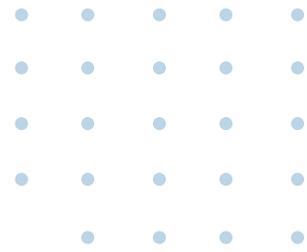
The February 2023 National Children's Dental Health Month (NCDHM) is brought to you by the American Dental Association (ADA). This month-long national health observance brings together thousands of dedicated professionals, healthcare providers, and educators to promote the benefits of good oral health to children, their caregivers, teachers, and many others.

The ADA is pleased to provide you with the February 2023 NCDHM Program Planning Guide.

The NCDHM Program Planning Guide offers oral health champions resources to promote the benefits of good oral health and prevention to children. The guide includes easy-to-do activities, program planning timetable tips, a sample NCDHM proclamation and much, much more. To learn more about National Children's Dental Health Month please visit: [ADA.org/NCDHM](https://ada.org/NCDHM).

You can also order FREE Posters or purchase Postcards, and download materials. Posters (FREE with English on one side of the poster and Spanish on the reverse side) & Postcards (available for purchase in English and Spanish) can be ordered. Activity Sheets or Flyers (available in English & Spanish) can be printed.

**"FEBRUARY IS NATIONAL CHILDREN'S
DENTAL HEALTH MONTH AND IS DEDICATED
TO EMPHASIZING THE VALUE OF
ESTABLISHING GOOD ORAL HEALTH HABITS
IN CHILDREN AT AN EARLY AGE."**





BRUSH FLOSS SMILE

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February is National Children's Dental Health Month. Visit [ADA.org/NCDHM](https://ada.org/NCDHM) for more activity sheets.



HEALTHY SMILE TIPS



BRUSH YOUR TEETH 2X/DAY
WITH FLUORIDE TOOTHPASTE.



CLEAN BETWEEN YOUR
TEETH DAILY.



EAT HEALTHY FOODS AND
LIMIT SUGARY BEVERAGES.



SEE YOUR DENTIST AT LEAST
TWICE A YEAR.

ADA American
Dental
Association®

IMPORTANT MEMO REGARDING YOUR 2023 MEMBERSHIP DUES

You should soon be receiving your 2023 Membership Dues statement.

In 2023, TDA is offering four different payment options for dues:

- OPTION 1:** Payment in full, due January 1st
- OPTION 2:** Two equal payments, due Jan 1st and June 1st
- OPTION 3:** Four equal payments, due Jan 1st, March 1st, May 1st, July 1st
- OPTION 4:** Monthly installments, due on the first business day of each month

****Options 2, 3 and 4 can only be paid via credit card through an automatic deduction. ****

To pay your 2023 membership dues:

- Send your check or credit card payment information directly to the TDA Executive Office at 660 Bakers Bridge Avenue Suite 300, Franklin, TN 37067
- Visit the TDA website at tndentalassociation.org to make an online payment

The TDA accepts Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express

Membership is based on the calendar year regardless of when you joined or paid your 2022 dues, benefits expire on December 31st of each year. Renew your membership by March 31st to ensure continuous membership benefits.



CALL THE TDA BEFORE YOU MOVE!

Moving to another city or state could affect your membership. Simply updating your address doesn't ensure you are enrolled into the correct local component society. Please call the TDA Executive office before you move so your membership records can be transferred as necessary.



Dental Lifeline
Network • Tennessee
More than Dentistry. Life.

WILL YOU SEE ONE?



Dental Lifeline Network • Tennessee needs dentists like you to help people with disabilities or who are elderly or medically fragile and have no other way to get the dental care they desperately need.

More than 134 people are waiting for care on Tennessee's Donated Dental Services (DDS) waitlist. This is where you come in. By volunteering through Dental Lifeline Network • Tennessee's DDS program, you will join a network of 200 dentists across the state who are significantly impacting Tennessee communities by volunteering to see just one patient a year.



Providing dental services for DDS patients has brought not only myself great joy and satisfaction but also my team. We truly enjoy getting to know these patients, learning their stories and assisting them in any way that we can."

**- DR. JENNIFER CORNELL
(CLARKSVILLE),
DDS VOLUNTEER SINCE 2007**



ABOUT DENTAL LIFELINE NETWORK

Since its launch in 1985, Dental Lifeline Network's DDS program has provided over \$521 million in donated dental therapies, impacting the lives of almost 168,000 vulnerable individuals.

Dental Lifeline Network is a strategic partner of the American Dental Association, and supported by the Tennessee Dental Association. To learn more about DLN, or get involved, visit **DentalLifeline.org**.



VOLUNTEER PROCESS

The DDS program makes it easy to get involved. We screen patients, coordinate appointments, work with volunteer labs, and complete the necessary paperwork so you can focus on providing life-changing patient care. To learn more, visit

WillYouSeeOne.org.

WILLYOUSEEONE.ORG



SIGN UP TODAY:

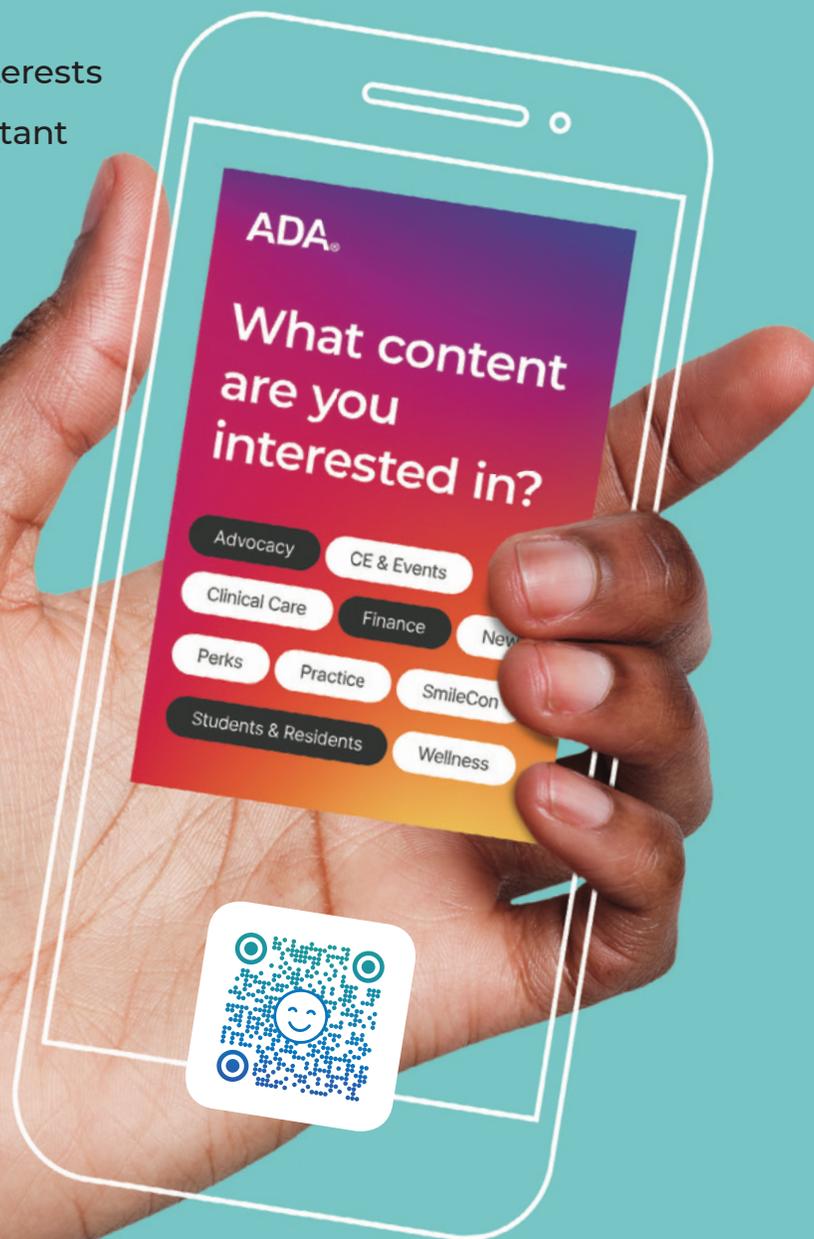


APP-SOLUTELY RE-IMAGINED!

Designed for dentists, with dentists, the new ADA Member App is here and ready to put the resources you need in the palm of your hand.

- Chat 1:1 or with your network
- Newsfeed customized to your interests
- Digital wallet to store your important documents
- Stream the new “Dental Sound Bites” podcast

Tap into possibility at
ADA.org/App



THE ADA MEMBER APP

A NEW WAY TO TAP INTO MEMBERSHIP

Members can tap into resources, support and community, all in the palm of their hands with the re-imagined ADA Member App.

This app isn't just made for dentists, it's made with them. When designing the app, ADA team members worked directly with dentists from different practice modalities, including dental students.

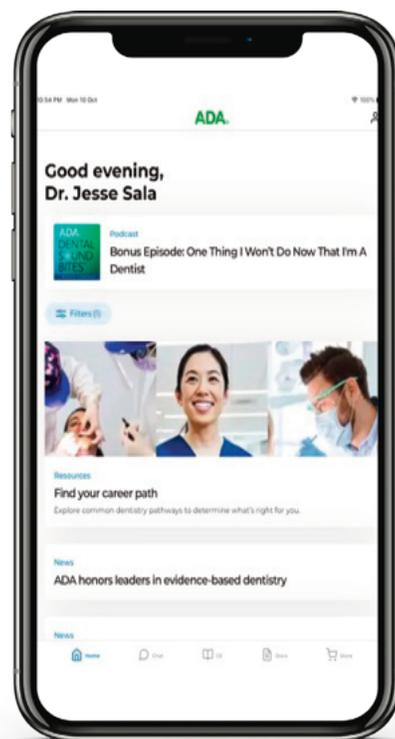
"The sky was the limit with this group—there were great ideas flying in all directions," said Colton Cannon, a fourth-year dental student at the University of Minnesota School of Dentistry and immediate past president of the American Student Dental Association. "It was really crucial to me and all the dentists working on this that the app be done right and making sure it had all the great ADA resources and tools and combining them with the usability and accessibility that new generations of dentists are used to. Working to do that is what I'm most proud of."

The result of this collaboration is evident throughout the re-imagined ADA Member App.

ADA Member App features include:

CHAT: Tap into the ADA dental community by creating private one-to-one and group chats.

DENTAL SOUND BITES™: Stream real talk on dentistry's daily wins and sticky situations. Tune in to "Dental Sound Bites" on the ADA Member App for exclusive content.



C'mon get 'appy!



DIGITAL WALLET: Store and easily access important documents like CE, licensing, credentialing and more.

CUSTOM NEWSFEED: Choose topics to follow and read what matters most to you. Career Pathways: Get real-life insights from dentists in different settings.

"This app is really a collaboration from the ADA and its members," said Kirthi Tata, D.D.S., a new dentist working in a private dental practice in St. Louis, Missouri. "The ADA really focused on the various resources dentists look for in all the various aspects of their career and, more importantly, how all those resources can be accessible in one place."

The revamped app is a key new benefit to members and will continue to evolve with new offerings and features.

"As technology continues to advance the profession, the ADA needs to be able to learn and adapt and evolve with it," said Raymond Cohlma, D.D.S., ADA executive director. "This app is an important part of helping the ADA reach its member dentists so we can be there for them when they need us. I can't wait for every dentist to download the app and see what we have to offer them."

Learn more at ADA.org/App or search "ADA Member App" in the App Store or Google Play to download now.



Open Leadership Positions

Interested in getting involved with the TDA in a leadership position?
The opportunities below are available for nomination.

HOUSE ELECTED POSITIONS / DEADLINE MARCH 31, 2023

- President-elect (candidates accepted from districts Seven, Eight, and Memphis) *Any qualified TDA member may run for the office of TDA President-elect. Eligibility can be found in Chapter VII. Section 20 of the TDA Bylaws.
 - Treasurer (Dr. Jay Davis is eligible for re-election)
 - Trustee / Nashville (Dr. Rhonda Switzer-Nadasdi is eligible for election.)
 - Speaker of the TDA House of Delegates (Dr. John Petty is eligible for re-election)
 - East Tennessee Vice President (candidates accepted from CADS)
 - Trustee / Eighth District
 - Secretary (Dr. Allen Bureson is eligible for re-election)
 - **Trustee Positions** / Deadline January 31, 2023
 - Trustee / Memphis (Dr. Stuart Hudsmith is eligible for re-election)
- Candidates for trustee positions must complete a conflict of interest statement and return to the TDA Executive Office before election by their component society.*

TDA Members Inducted into the International College of Dentists

Nine Tennessee Dentists were inducted into Fellowship to the USA Section of the International College of Dentists at the Annual Convocation held in Houston, Texas. The International College of Dentists is the premier world-wide honorary dental society. Fellowship in the College is by invitation only. Fellows are selected according to their contributions to the dental profession, their communities, and humanity. Fellows must exemplify the ICD's core values of Integrity, Leadership, and Service. Congratulations to this year's recipients.

Dr. Ron Bell
Seventh District Dental Society

Dr. Julie Ann Gray
Nashville Dental Society

Dr. Anita Sykes-Smith
Nashville Dental Society

Dr. Veran A. Fairrow
Nashville Dental Society

Dr. James C. Hawkins
Seventh District Dental Society

Dr. Edward Vaughan
Seventh District Dental Society

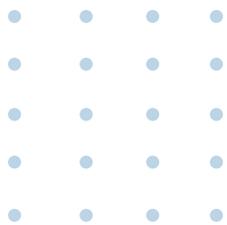
Dr. Marie Farrar
Chattanooga Area Dental Society

Dr. Raj Kshatri
Nashville Dental Society

Dr. Tiffany Elise Wilson
Nashville Dental Society

GOOD SLEEP FOR GOOD HEALTH

GET THE REST YOU NEED



S

Sometimes, the pace of modern life barely gives you time to stop and rest. It can make getting a good night's sleep on a regular basis seem like a dream. But sleep is as important for good health as diet and exercise. Good sleep improves your brain performance, mood, and health.

Not getting enough quality sleep regularly raises the risk of many diseases and disorders. These range from heart disease and stroke to obesity and dementia.

There's more to good sleep than just the hours spent in bed, says Dr. Marishka Brown, a sleep expert at NIH. "Healthy sleep encompasses three major things," she explains. "One is how much sleep you get. Another is sleep quality—that you get uninterrupted and refreshing sleep. The last is a consistent sleep schedule."

People who work the night shift or irregular schedules may find getting quality sleep extra challenging. And times of great stress—like the current pandemic—can disrupt our normal sleep routines. But there are many things you can do to improve your sleep.



GETTING A BETTER NIGHT'S SLEEP

SLEEP FOR REPAIR

Why do we need to sleep? People often think that sleep is just “down time,” when a tired brain gets to rest, says Dr. Maiken Nedergaard, who studies sleep at the University of Rochester.

“But that’s wrong,” she says. While you sleep, your brain is working. For example, sleep helps prepare your brain to learn, remember, and create.

Nedergaard and her colleagues discovered that the brain has a drainage system that removes toxins during sleep.

“When we sleep, the brain totally changes function,” she explains. “It becomes almost like a kidney, removing waste from the system.”

Her team found in mice that the drainage system removes some of the proteins linked with Alzheimer’s disease. These toxins were removed twice as fast from the brain during sleep.

Everything from blood vessels to the immune system uses sleep as a time for repair, says Dr. Kenneth Wright, Jr., a sleep researcher at the University of Colorado.

“There are certain repair processes that occur in the body mostly, or most effectively, during sleep,” he explains. “If you don’t get enough sleep, those processes are going to be disturbed.”



“WHEN WE SLEEP, THE BRAIN TOTALLY CHANGES FUNCTION,” SHE EXPLAINS. “IT BECOMES ALMOST LIKE A KIDNEY, REMOVING WASTE FROM THE SYSTEM.”

SLEEP MYTHS AND TRUTHS

How much sleep you need changes with age. Experts recommend school-age children get at least nine hours a night and teens get between eight and 10. Most adults need at least seven hours or more of sleep each night.

There are many misunderstandings about sleep. One is that adults need less sleep as they get older. This isn’t true. Older adults still need the same amount. But sleep quality can get worse as you age. Older adults are also more likely to take medications that interfere with sleep.

Another sleep myth is that you can “catch up” on your days off. Researchers are finding that this largely isn’t the case.

“If you have one bad night’s sleep and take a nap, or sleep longer the next night, that can benefit you,” says Wright. “But if you have a week’s worth of getting too little sleep, the weekend isn’t sufficient for you to catch up. That’s not a healthy behavior.”

Stick to a sleep schedule.

Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on the weekends.

Get some exercise every day. But not close to bedtime.

Go outside. Try to get natural sunlight for at least 30 minutes every day.

Avoid nicotine and caffeine. Both are stimulants that keep you awake. Caffeine can take 6–8 hours to wear off completely.

Don’t take naps after mid-afternoon. And keep them short.

Avoid alcohol and large meals before bedtime.

Both can prevent deep, restorative sleep.

Limit electronics before bed. Try reading a book, listening to soothing music, or another relaxing activity instead.

Create a good sleeping environment. Keep the temperature cool if possible. Get rid of sound and light distractions. Make it dark. Silence your cell phone.

Don’t lie in bed awake. If you can’t fall asleep after 20 minutes, get up and do a relaxing activity until you feel sleepy again.

See your health care provider if nothing you try helps. They can determine if you need further testing. They can also help you learn new ways to manage stress.

In a recent study, Wright and his team looked at people with consistently deficient sleep. They compared them to sleep-deprived people who got to sleep in on the weekend.

Both groups of people gained weight with lack of sleep. Their bodies' ability to control blood sugar levels also got worse. The weekend catch-up sleep didn't help.

On the flip side, more sleep isn't always better, says Brown. For adults, "if you're sleeping more than nine hours a night and you still don't feel refreshed, there may be some underlying medical issue," she explains.

SLEEP DISORDERS

Some people have conditions that prevent them from getting enough quality sleep, no matter how hard they try. These problems are called sleep disorders.

The most common sleep disorder is insomnia. "Insomnia is when you have repeated difficulty getting to sleep and/or staying asleep," says Brown. This happens despite having the time to sleep and a proper sleep environment. It can make you feel tired or unrefreshed during the day.

Insomnia can be short-term, where people struggle to sleep for a few weeks or months. "Quite a few more people have been experiencing this during the pandemic," Brown says. Long-term insomnia lasts for three months or longer.



Sleep apnea is another common sleep disorder. In sleep apnea, the upper airway becomes blocked during sleep. This reduces or stops airflow, which wakes people up during the night. The condition can be dangerous. If untreated, it may lead to other health problems.

If you regularly have problems sleeping, talk with your health care provider. They may have you keep a sleep diary to track your sleep for several weeks. They can also run tests, including sleep studies. These look for sleep disorders.

GETTING BETTER SLEEP

If you're having trouble sleeping, hearing how important it is may be frustrating. But simple things can improve your odds of a good night's sleep. See the Wise Choices box for tips on the previous page to sleep better every day.

Treatments are available for many common sleep disorders. Cognitive behavioral therapy can help many people with insomnia get better sleep. Medications can also help some people.

Many people with sleep apnea benefit from using a device called a CPAP machine. These machines keep the airway open so that you can breathe. Other treatments can include special mouthguards and lifestyle changes.

For everyone, "as best you can, try to make sleep a priority," Brown says. "Sleep is not a throwaway thing—it's a biological necessity."

Source: NIH News in Health. For the latest news from the National Institutes of Health, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, visit [news.nih.gov](https://www.news.nih.gov)

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RETAINING YOUR DENTAL STAFF

THROUGH THE GREAT RESIGNATION

By Dr. Suzanne Ebert, VP Dental Practice & Relationship Management



The Great Resignation has reached dentistry — especially as hygienists choose not to return to the profession. In fact, a study co-authored by the American Dental Hygienists' Association and the American Dental Association found that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a contraction of about 3.75% of all hygienists, representing a loss of approximately 7,500 hygienists nationwide.

The result is a scramble for qualified staff. The ADA's Health Policy Institute reported that as of July, 74% of private practice dentists say that it is now "extremely challenging" to recruit qualified dental hygienists, and another 19% say it is "very challenging." Similarly, 84% of dentists say it is extremely or very challenging to recruit dental assistants.

That's why it's essential that owner dentists take steps to retain their most valuable resource: long-tenured, knowledgeable staff who have built trust with patients.

WHY HYGIENISTS ARE LEAVING THE WORKFORCE

When dental practices closed at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, many staff were sent home. Even as practices began reopening, many of the 98% of practicing dental hygienists who are female found themselves juggling childcare challenges. Dental work has no "remote" option, and dental schedules inherently lack the flexibility to pivot when a child has to stay home unexpectedly due to a COVID exposure.

As a result, many hygienists began to exit the profession entirely. An August 2021 study found that 74% of hygienists not working had left the profession for voluntary reasons. Of those, 37% say they decided to retire.



THE ADA'S HEALTH POLICY INSTITUTE REPORTED THAT AS OF JULY, 74% OF PRIVATE PRACTICE DENTISTS SAY THAT IT IS NOW "EXTREMELY CHALLENGING" TO RECRUIT QUALIFIED DENTAL HYGIENISTS, AND ANOTHER 19% SAY IT IS "VERY CHALLENGING."



Some of the remaining hygienists are leveraging the shortage to find jobs closer to home or negotiate for greater flexibility, higher pay, or better benefits. As of June 2022, 79.9% of practice owners had raised pay for their dental hygienists within the past year — with 18.1% reporting increasing wages by 10% or more.

However, even as workers look for greener pastures, 52% of those voluntarily leaving a job said that their manager could have “done something” to keep them.

Dentists who want to retain their staff should begin to think differently about how they work with and reward their most valuable contributors. After all, when a hygienist leaves, dentists need to continue to provide the care and will do it themselves or ask an associate to perform periodontal procedures, which limits their time for more

complex (and lucrative) treatments.

When one hygienist leaves, many owners simply dust off their old “help wanted” ad. That’s not enough in today’s increasingly competitive market — especially since dentistry can’t offer “work from home” as a perk.

If you own a practice, here are some proactive steps you can take to retain your staff.

1. HIRE SMART, NOT FAST

The best way to retain staff starts long before their first day: finding the right person for the practice rather than the first available person. After all, dentistry is all about relationships.

When I hired hygienists and staff for my own

practice, I paid close attention to how a prospective hire would fit in and support me, the rest of the staff, and the patients. Specific skills can be trained, so it’s more important to find a person with the right personality, a strong work ethic, and similar expectations about the role.

Skills can be trained, so it’s more important to find the right person for your team.

To identify this right person, make sure your interview is a two-way conversation. Describe how the office runs, then ask how that meshes with the prospective employee’s experience, preferences, and expectations. Listen closely, especially if they are coming from a practice much larger or smaller than yours.

Look at a typical week’s schedule together and discuss:

- How the staff works together
- What hygienists handle and what is delegated to assistants
- Whether the hygienist will work from a dedicated operatory or float between several
- The typical pace
- How vacations and time off are covered

It’s better to wait a few extra weeks for the right person who will fit in rather than hire the wrong person and need to launch another hiring process six months later.

2. REEVALUATE COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

When was the last time you evaluated how your pay and benefits stack up? The federal Bureau of Labor Statistics cites 2020’s median hygienist pay as \$77,090 per year, or \$37.06 per hour. The average dental assistant earned \$41,180 annually, or \$19.80 an hour. While this varies greatly by state, it gives you a starting point. Talk to fellow owners in your area to see how you compare. And remember that as many industries raise their wages or offer more flexibility, you may need to compete beyond dentistry. I’ve heard many stories of personable dental staff taking their skills to customer service-type roles that they can do from home.

While you're at it, take a look at the benefits you offer. If you can't afford to increase salaries, consider more time off, a CE allowance, or greater flexibility. Think about profit sharing, as it ties the practice's success to the staff's pocketbook. Talk to your staff to see what's important to them.

3. BUILD CAREER SATISFACTION THROUGH REGULAR COACHING CONVERSATIONS

More money only goes so far if your staff are miserable. Help staff see how vital they are to the practice's success and help them define (and pursue) a career path that

- Does an assistant want help becoming a hygienist, or is a hygienist considering dental school?

At the end of each discussion, set a few concrete action items (with target dates) like seeking CE or making a schedule change. Revisit these conversations periodically to check in, celebrate progress, and problem-solve.

See: How to Become a Team Leader

4. DO "LITTLE THINGS" THAT ADD UP

Make sure you show your appreciation for your staff's hard work. Even little things can

5. HELP YOUR STAFF BALANCE THEIR OTHER COMMITMENTS

Yes, a dental office needs to be open at set hours. But when was the last time you examined how well your schedule meshes with your staff's off-the-clock needs?

Ask staff what their ideal schedule would look like. You may be surprised to learn that one team member wishes they could attend their child's activity on Wednesday afternoons or volunteer on Friday mornings. One person might prefer to work four longer days while another team member wouldn't mind picking up an extra half day each week. Look for simple changes or swaps.

If you're new to the practice and considering extending or changing the hours, discuss it with your staff first to get their buy-in. Avoid springing changes on them that will affect their work-life balance.

And wherever possible, try to offer some flexibility when "life happens."

RETAIN YOUR STAFF TO PRESERVE ACCESS-TO-CARE

While the hygienist shortage poses serious challenges to dentistry, closing practices hurts communities and patients who most need care.

That's why we at ADA Practice Transitions (ADAPT) help match would-be buyers with long-time owners who are ready to sell. We also match owners with like-minded associates. Along the way, we provide coaching to help set dentists — and staff — up for lasting success. While we focus on matching dentists, we know that dental staff at all levels are essential to keeping practices thriving and serving patients long after the Great Resignation has eased.

This article originally appeared Sept. 7, 2022 in the ADAPT blog. ADA Practice Transitions (ADAPT) matches you with the right dentist or practice; whether you are looking to sell your practice, hire an associate, buy a dental practice or find a job.

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reminds them why they chose dentistry in the first place.

Have an honest conversation with each staff member about their goals. This is especially vital if you have just purchased the practice: make an effort to get to know your new team! For example:

- What do they want to learn?
- Would they like more autonomy or more mentorship?
- Do they want to manage junior staff or take a larger role in the business?

make a difference, such as treats, unexpected extra PTO, staff dinners, or office competitions with prizes. Recognize birthdays or work anniversaries. If you're just entering the practice, strive to build some team spirit.

And don't overlook the power of acknowledging your staff. A handwritten note or genuine thanks when someone goes above and beyond can be very rewarding. Be sure you pass along any praise or compliments from patients. Share these publicly, whether during a team meeting or on your practice's social media, to further acknowledge staff efforts.

Fundamentally, ensure you are always treating staff fairly and with respect.

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NEW DENTIST CORNER

Emotional intelligence is a vital skill for new dentists

Dentistry can be stressful due to the complex operating field, small workplace, and the required expert skills.

Patient stress and fear surrounding the dentist is also a factor in creating a sometimes-challenging environment.

You may hear “I hate going to the dentist” from patients or experience resistance, which can create pressure in your workspace. Imagine starting your day with high spirits, excited to meet all the patients for the day. Then, as soon as you happily greet them and ask how their day is going, you’re met with, “It could be better if I weren’t here.”

How you respond to these interactions is essential because you can change the atmosphere by encouraging the patient to let their guard down and become more engaged for the remainder of their visit. The stress a dentist may accumulate throughout the day can also impact their team members. Staff behavior and interpersonal issues can also create excess stress on a dentist, as they are responsible for resolving many issues within the work environment. The pressure of working with anxious and fearful patients can be detrimental to a dental practitioner. While a dentist may not react psychologically to this pressure, the reaction happens physiologically (increased heart rate, high blood pressure, sweating, etc.). In the

long run, these instances can damage the body, causing stress on the heart and even an increased risk of a heart attack.

We can’t change the reality regarding patients’ fears and behavioral patterns. It’s natural. But we can learn to accept the pressure, handle it with proper care and maintain healthy responses, creating a much safer and more welcoming environment for the patient and staff.

Emotional intelligence — EQ — is the ability to interpret and manage your emotions, as well as the emotions of others. It’s about using your internal guidance system to make healthy and beneficial choices based on your emotional understanding. When someone has a high level of EQ, they’re able to connect with others on a deeper level, which creates repeat business and increases the likelihood that patients will recommend their services. Growing up, my country experienced war, and I witnessed first-hand how the absence of emotional intelligence can directly affect society. I saw how the 2003 war directly affected the people. Life seemed to become shorter than before, and it became difficult for me to watch. Moving from such an environment and settling in a place with different surroundings has shown me various levels of emotional intelligence and just how important it is.

While it’s true that dentists are skilled at carrying out dental procedures, research shows that having emotional intelligence as a dentist has a direct effect on the patient’s experience, and even how long they stay with their dentist. Dentists have to be able to deal with the emotional well-being of their patients, too. The more we perceive that we’re being treated with fairness and kindness, the better our overall experience will be.

Stronger relationships

EQ is responsible for lasting healthy relationships because it increases dentists’ awareness of the emotional changes within a clinic. A well-built EQ enhances the sensitivity of a person to their own emotions and those around them. An active awareness of the emotional changes within a dentist’s environment allows the quick initiative to resolve even slight shifts in the working relationship dynamics.

Better communication

Listening is essential for effective communication because it allows us to understand our listener’s feelings and needs before responding. When a dentist fully understands a patient’s needs and why those needs must be met, they can communicate much more effectively. EQ helps them listen, understand the subtle key points of a conversation and allows them to respond appropriately and effectively.



Reading between the lines also helps dentists express empathy by understanding other people's emotions and the root of these emotions. The truth behind certain emotions can stem from almost every area of their life. This kind of emotional intelligence makes it easier for us to understand our feelings and those of others. Knowing how others feel gives us more confidence and understanding when speaking to them.

Less anxiety and stress

How a dentist responds under pressure is an attribute that defines their success and the success of the dental department as a whole. An emotional reaction during challenging situations masks someone's objectivity and ability to make rational decisions. Dental professionals benefit from having high emotional intelligence because their actions and behaviors are absorbed by both patients and staff. Toxic emotions at the dental clinic can affect how dentists live their personal lives and their behavior while at the clinic. As a dentist, such emotions will constrain your ability to inspire and motivate your staff. Successful leaders create healthy work environments by cultivating high emotional intelligence levels, which overcome common feelings of stress and anxiety in the workplace.

Empathy

Empathy allows us all to be more

compassionate toward one another, which can only improve our understanding of other people's behavior and needs. Empathy comes in handy for EQ. Knowing what someone else is feeling or thinking allows you to understand their situation better and act accordingly. Emotional intelligence also helps you understand how your actions affect others emotionally in the dental clinic.

Help Overcome Life Challenges

As a dentist, emotional intelligence helps you overcome challenges. The following are some of the ways that EQ can help you:

- **Resilience:** You're more likely to bounce back from adversity if you have emotional intelligence because you control your emotions. If something happens, for example, and your patient gives negative feedback about a procedure — which isn't good news— you'll be able to handle it better than someone who doesn't have strong EQ skills.
- **Happiness:** High emotional intelligence means recognizing things aren't going well in your life and changing them before they worsen. By doing this, dentists become less depressed about issues associated with the working environment. It also allows greater flexibility around the dental clinic's objectives by ensuring dentists don't hold back on their duties because of undue work pressure.



DR. SAMMARRAIE

Conclusion

After years of research and practicing emotional intelligence, I have become a better listener and problem solver, and I always depict calmness in situations when dealing with difficult people. It is not easy to deal with challenges and frustration in the workplace. Everyone needs emotional support from the people they interact with daily. Emotionally intelligent dentists have peace of mind and always excel in their careers.

EQ makes dentists enjoy practicing, reducing work-related stress and burnout, likely increasing their life expectancy. Dentists can then treat patients with honesty, autonomy and humanity, which is in itself giving back to the community. A community that receives positive energy transmits it back. This is the priceless reward of emotional intelligence.

This article originally appeared October 1, 2022 in the ADA New Dentist Now blog, newdentistblog.ada.org.

Muhalab Al Sammarraie, D.D.S., grew up in Baghdad before coming to the U.S. as a foreign-trained dentist. He graduated with honors in 2019 and became a member of the ADA, California Dental Association and the San Diego County Dental Society. While working towards his second degree, he accrued leadership experience in public, private, and nonprofit sectors through leading teams and overseeing process improvement in education, social service and health care. Dr. Al Sammarraie is currently a site dental director at AltaMed Health Services, one of the nation's largest FQHCs. He is also a subject matter expert for the dental board of California. Outside of dentistry, Dr. Al Sammarraie supports activist groups in Iraq that help war victims and displaced people find education and medical care.

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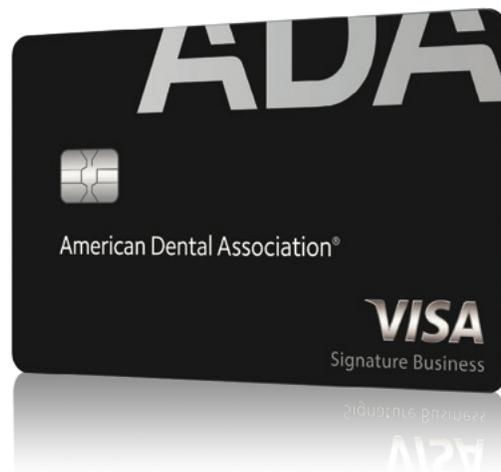
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