



TENNESSEE

MARCH/APRIL 2025 VOLUME 31, ISSUE 2

DENTAL

ASSOCIATION NEWS

TNDENTAL.ORG



LIFELONG LEARNING A CONVERSATION WITH DR. STEVEN SILBERG

See page 4

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

TDA BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING REPORT



The TDA Board of Trustees, chaired by TDA President Dr. Stuart Hudsmith, convened on February 22, 2025, via Zoom video conferencing. Below are the key actions and reports from the meeting.

Actions of the Board:

Audit: The Board selected Bellenfant CPA Group as the TDA audit firm for fiscal year end 2025.

Continuing Education Tracking: Approved exploring partnerships for CE tracking.

Awards:
Fellowship Awardees 2025: Dr. Andrew Conkin, First District; Dr. John Coulter, Second District; Dr. Josh Hethcox, Second District; Dr. John Spann, Chattanooga Area; Dr. Joanne Gaydos-Daniel, Fourth District; Dr. Joel Gluck, Nashville; Dr. Maggie Pitts, Nashville; Dr. Jackie McClain, Seventh District; Dr. Nishel Patel, Memphis; Dr. Kevin Wells, Memphis.

Dr. Jack Wells Dedication to Dentistry Award: Dr. Samuel McKenna, Nashville.

New Dentist Impact Award: Dr. Brooklin Byrd, Memphis.

RESOLUTIONS FOR THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES:

Full-time Faculty Membership: Revise definition for those working at least 16 hours per week.

Audit: Remove requirement for an annual audit.

Pilot Programs: Allow for Board-approved pilot programs.

Component Membership: Allow members to choose membership based on where they practice or where they reside.

Highlighted Reports:

Treasurer's Report:
Ms. Andrea Hayes, Executive Director, presented the unaudited financial report as of January 31, 2025.

Legislative Report:
Ms. Andrea Hayes and TDA lobbyist Ms. Courtney Atnip, reported on the current legislative session, specifically noting two bills regarding fluoridation.

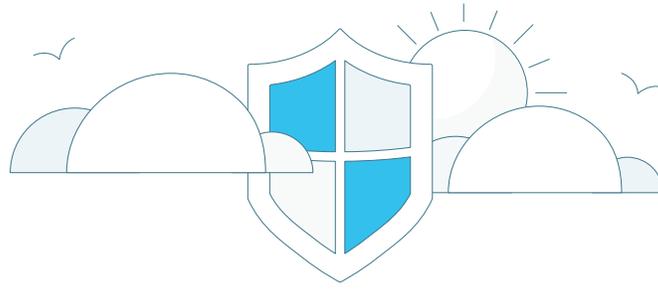
Task Force on Governance Sustainability, Strategic Plan 2.1:

Per Dr. Rhonda Switzer-Nadasdi, Chair, the task force identified four key areas for governance review. After evaluating each area in separate meetings, they recognized their strong interconnection and will review the overall TDA governance structure to set priorities moving forward.

President's Report:
President **Dr. Stuart Hudsmith** reported on individual component meetings focusing on membership.

President-elect's Report:
Dr. Allen Burleson provided the Board's meeting schedule for his upcoming year as TDA President.

Executive Director's Report:
Ms. Andrea Hayes updated the Board on various matters, including the challenges associated with the implementation of the new ADA database system, Music City Dental Conference on May 1-3, 2025, and TDA Dentists' Day on the Hill on March 12, 2025.



Malpractice insurance that's all about **you.**

As a dentist, you face unique challenges every day. That's why at MedPro Group, we created an industry-leading malpractice policy that keeps you safe. Here's what else you can expect with MedPro on your side.



Get unmatched coverage.

You'll get great coverage at a great price. We also offer policy options that others don't — including Occurrence and a pure consent clause, which gives you more control during a claim.



Practice more safely.

With 24/7 access to our free risk resources and on-staff experts, you and your practice will be better prepared for every day challenges. We don't just defend claims, we help you avoid them.



Protect your good name.

The average dentist is sued at least once in their career, which is why we're in your corner when it matters most. We lead the industry with a 95% dental trial win rate (plus 8 out of 10 claims close without payment).



MedPro Group
a Berkshire Hathaway company

tda Tennessee
DENTAL ASSOCIATION

Scan for a quote.



Ready to get the best protection for you?

Contact us for your free custom quote and see how much you could save!

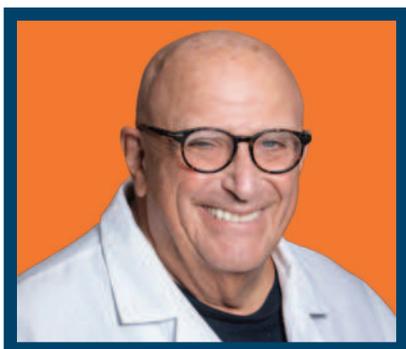
833.641.1715

medprodental.com/TNDA

All data is derived from MedPro Group records and calculations; claims data range is 2013-2022 unless otherwise indicated. MedPro Group is the marketing name used to refer to the insurance operations of The Medical Protective Company, Princeton Insurance Company, PLICO, Inc. and MedPro RRG Risk Retention Group. All insurance products are administered by MedPro Group and underwritten by these and other Berkshire Hathaway affiliates, including National Fire & Marine Insurance Company. Product availability is based upon business and/or regulatory approval and may differ among companies. © MedPro Group Inc. All Rights Reserved. Dental-240990

LIFELONG LEARNING

A CONVERSATION WITH DR. STEVEN SILBERG



For Dr. Steven Silberg, the dental field is a journey of constant discovery. As an Associate Professor of Oral Diagnostic Sciences and Research at Meharry Medical College, he bridges the worlds of clinical practice and academic advancement. His position and experience in the field give him a unique perspective on lifelong learning. Continuing education in dentistry is more than staying current; it is an opportunity to better serve your community and its diverse population.

In this conversation with *TDA News*, Dr. Silberg shares his insights on how keeping current has shaped his career. He talks to us about the value of lifelong learning and shares practical wisdom for dentists in every career stage.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND AND WHAT GOT YOU INTO DENTISTRY?

I come from a family where many of our family members were in the medical profession, and I wanted to go in that direction. My father was a pediatrician and an excellent immunologist. When I told him I wanted to go to school to learn medicine, he felt that life-and-death situations may not be the best thing for me because I take things very seriously. I agreed with him.

I had excellent hands-on skills, good biology skills, and basic sciences throughout high school, college, and graduate school. These skills led me to dentistry. The first dental school that accepted me was Meharry Medical College, where I enrolled in 1968 and graduated in 1972. Afterward, I returned to New York to complete my residency at Mount Sinai Beth Israel Hospital. Following a few years of working alongside other doctors, I opened my personal practice in 1980. I continued to practice there until 2015, after which I returned to Meharry to teach and give back to my school community.



MARCH 2025 VOLUME 31, ISSUE 2

Executive Editor: Andrea Hayes
Managing Editor: Lourdes Arevalo

The Tennessee Dental Association News (USPS 013358) is published bimonthly: January, March, May, July, September and November, by the Tennessee Dental Association, 660 Bakers Bridge Avenue, Suite 300, Franklin, TN 37067-6461.

The Tennessee Dental Association disclaims all responsibility for the opinions and statements of all alleged facts made by the contributors and advertisers to this newsletter unless such opinions or statements have been adopted by the Association. If you have any questions, please call the TDA Executive Office at 615-628-0208.



The TDA is an ADA CERP provider

ADA CERP is a service of the American Dental Association to assist dental professionals in identifying quality providers of continuing education. ADA CERP does not approve or endorse individual courses or instructors, nor does it imply acceptance of credit hours by boards of dentistry. Concerns or complaints about a CE provider may be directed to the provider or to ADA CERP at ada.org/cerp.



INSTAGRAM

TNDentalAssn

LINKEDIN

TNDentalAssn

FACEBOOK

TennesseeDentalAssociation

YOU HAVE PRACTICED DENTISTRY FOR MANY YEARS AND NOW TEACH AT MEHARRY MEDICAL COLLEGE AS AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR. WHAT DRIVES YOUR COMMITMENT TO STAYING CURRENT IN THE DENTAL FIELD?

It allows me to continue to learn, develop new skills, adapt to changing environments, and enhance career prospects for others, especially our students who want to learn more about dentistry. Continuing education also helps me improve my own cognitive function and find personal fulfillment throughout my life. These reasons motivate my commitment to lifelong learning, and why I returned to Meharry.

HOW HAS YOUR APPROACH TO DENTISTRY EVOLVED SINCE YOU FIRST GRADUATED, AND WHAT ROLE HAS CONTINUING EDUCATION PLAYED IN THAT JOURNEY?

My perspective on dentistry is evolving into a more global view of care. We focus not only on treating teeth but also on caring for people as individuals. Instead of merely addressing diseases or symptoms, we prioritize the person behind those issues. Additionally, our approach to dentistry is shifting towards less invasive protocols, and artificial intelligence is becoming part of our daily practice. AI is not intended to make final decisions for us, but rather to provide us with a wide range of variables that aid us in making informed treatment decisions.

SOME DENTISTS MAY BE HESITANT TO INVEST IN NEW TECHNOLOGY. HOW WOULD YOU EVALUATE WHICH INNOVATIONS ARE WORTH IMPLEMENTING IN A DENTAL PRACTICE?

Transitioning from analog to digital processes and implementing CAD/CAM protocols is a promising direction for investment, particularly with the integration of artificial intelligence. While recent graduates may not have extensive knowledge in these areas initially, I recommend they take the time to connect with industry professionals. Attending events like the Music City Dental Conference and similar gatherings across the country can be incredibly beneficial. The conference exhibitors can provide valuable insights into the best products suited to your needs. Additionally, establishing relationships with these vendors can lead to improved technical support in the future. I found this collaborative approach to be very helpful; it allows us to work together effectively and break free of our silos.

HOW HAS CONTINUING EDUCATION HELPED YOU BETTER SERVE PATIENTS?

Continuing education has helped me avoid failure. In plain English, failure is not good. Life long learning leads to excellent outcomes and keeps us informed about current concepts. It's helped me discover my interests and dislikes within the field. Continuing education is fundamentally about exploration. I not only investigate what I enjoy but also what I do not like, seeking to understand the reason(s) why.

FOR DENTISTS LOOKING TO EXPAND THEIR SKILLS, WHICH LEARNING FORMAT HAVE YOU FOUND MOST VALUABLE (HANDS-ON WORKSHOPS, ONLINE COURSES, TRADITIONAL LECTURES, ETC.)?

All of them! During my first six years of practice, while working for other doctors, I learned a great deal from their experiences. They frequently attended one- and two-day programs and invited me to join them. I also became a member of their study groups, which met once a month for one to two hours. I studied independently and attended additional two-day programs on my own, but after 10 to 15 years, I realized these sessions often left me with more questions than answers.

After 20 years in practice, my refrigerator was emptying of new knowledge. I recognized the need to learn something new, so I enrolled in a six-month program on a topic I did not like. This was followed by a two-year program that changed my understanding of how I was providing care to patients. Upon completing the two-year program, I received my certificate and was offered a teaching position.

I have learned so much from various educational formats. Continuing education has been enjoyable, and it built my self-esteem. It has also allowed me to build relationships with my colleagues. Throughout this journey, I've met wonderful people in our profession and have learned from their life stories. We learn and grow together through continuing education.



The Original E-VAC Tip

Fits Standard Evacuator Tubes

- Disposable
- Inexpensive
- Non-Toxic
- 100 Tips/Pk

E-VAC INC.®

FDA Registered • Made in 

**PREVENT PAINFUL TISSUE PLUGS
PROTECT YOUR EQUIPMENT
FROM COSTLY REPAIRS**

Contact Your Local
Dental Supply Company

kenevac@hotmail.com

CALL: (509) 448-2602

SPEAKING OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, EVENTS LIKE THE UPCOMING MUSIC CITY DENTAL CONFERENCE OFFER GREAT LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE DENTAL TEAM. WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR WHEN CHOOSING WHICH CONFERENCES TO ATTEND?

First, I identify which city I want to visit. Then, I consider whether I have friends or associates there. Next, I reflect on what gap in my career the continuing education opportunity will help fill. Always consider the location, venue, and travel arrangements. Once you are there, enjoy it all.

FOR NEW DENTISTS PLANNING TO ATTEND THE MUSIC CITY DENTAL CONFERENCE, HOW CAN THEY GET THE MOST VALUE OUT OF THE EVENT?

Do it all! Meet new people, introduce yourself, and engage with exhibitors in the exhibit halls. You might be surprised how many individuals are eager to connect with you. By the end of the event, you'll have built a network of connections that can grow year after year. These are wonderful opportunities for personal and professional growth.

LOOKING AHEAD, WHAT TRENDS OR ADVANCEMENTS SHOULD DENTISTS BE PREPARING FOR? HOW CAN THEY BEST POSITION THEMSELVES FOR THESE CHANGES?

Prepare for change.

First, due to the influence of third-party payers, we are becoming less specialized and more interdisciplinary. Much like primary care physicians (PCPs), we are evolving into primary care dentists (PCDs). This means we are learning to treat patients in an interdisciplinary manner whenever possible.

Second, be aware of the rapid advancements in technology. Developments are occurring at an unprecedented pace, and it's essential to keep up.

Third, consider material sciences. Once the natural resources provided by nature are depleted, we will need to find replacements, but we currently lack alternatives of comparable quality. Our best option is to choose materials that are biomimetic – bioidentical is not yet possible. These materials often do not come in the sizes and shapes we need. We must create customized sizes and shapes for individuals with diverse functions, habits, lifestyles, and dietary choices. Therefore, it is crucial to understand material sciences.

Next, focus on interpersonal skills. Learn how to build relationships, maintain professionalism, and enjoy your work.

Lastly, AI may be creeping in faster than we like. Familiarize yourself with the AI technologies available, who develops them, and who controls them.



“ Continuing education has been enjoyable, and it built my self esteem. It has also allowed me to build relationships with my colleagues.”

EXPLORE YOUR LEARNING OPTIONS

In dentistry, learning never ends. Continuing education is about staying engaged, growing as a professional, and providing the best care to your patients. The TDA offers multiple CE options designed to fit your schedule and support your professional growth.



CE ON-DEMAND

With CE On-Demand, you can access courses anytime, anywhere. Whether you're looking to refine your clinical skills, enhance your practice management knowledge, or stay ahead of regulatory updates, our online CE options let you learn at your own pace.

[EXPLORE ON-DEMAND](#)



CE LOCALLY

Your local dental society offers in-person CE courses. These meetings provide an excellent opportunity to hear from industry experts and connect with colleagues in your area.

[FIND MY LOCAL DENTAL SOCIETY](#)

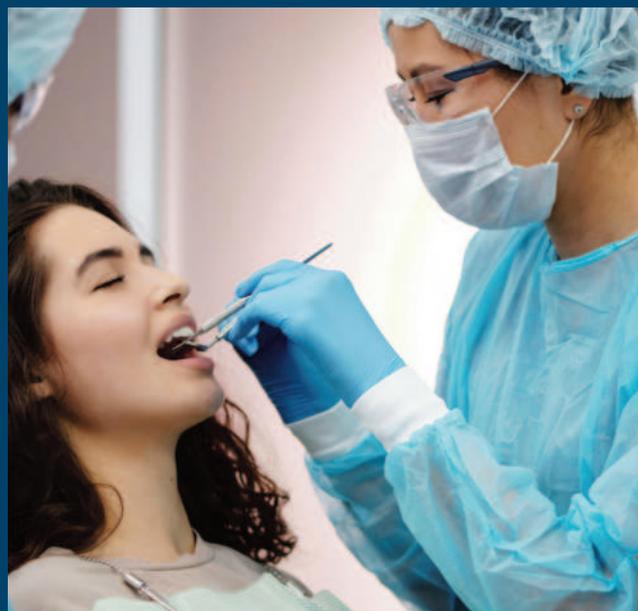
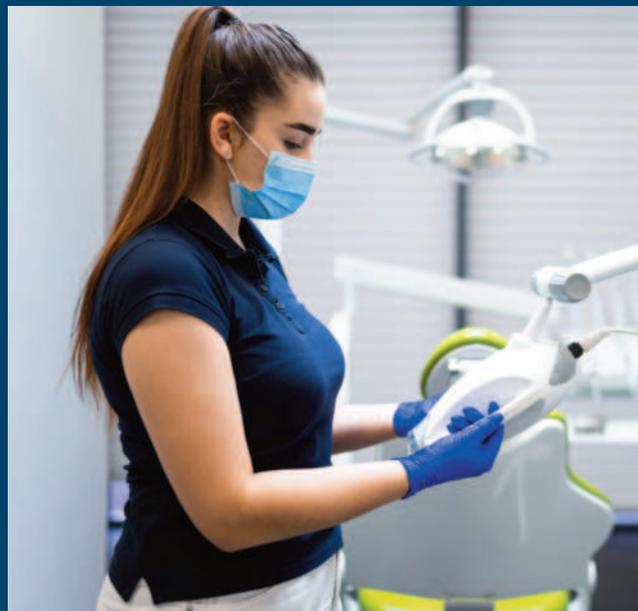


CE FOR THE WHOLE TEAM

The Music City Dental Conference (MCDC) is the heart of our educational offerings. MCDC is a place where your entire dental team can learn, grow, and connect – together. At MCDC, you'll find:

- **Expert-led courses** on the latest advancements, patient care strategies, and practice management solutions. At MCDC 2025, you'll hear from Dr. Brian Harris, Tom Viola, R.Ph., C.C.P., Olga Ibsen, RDH, MS, Shannon, Pace Brinker, CDA, and many more.
- **Team-focused sessions** that help improve communication, efficiency, and patient outcomes.
- **Opportunities to network** with colleagues, speakers, and exhibitors.

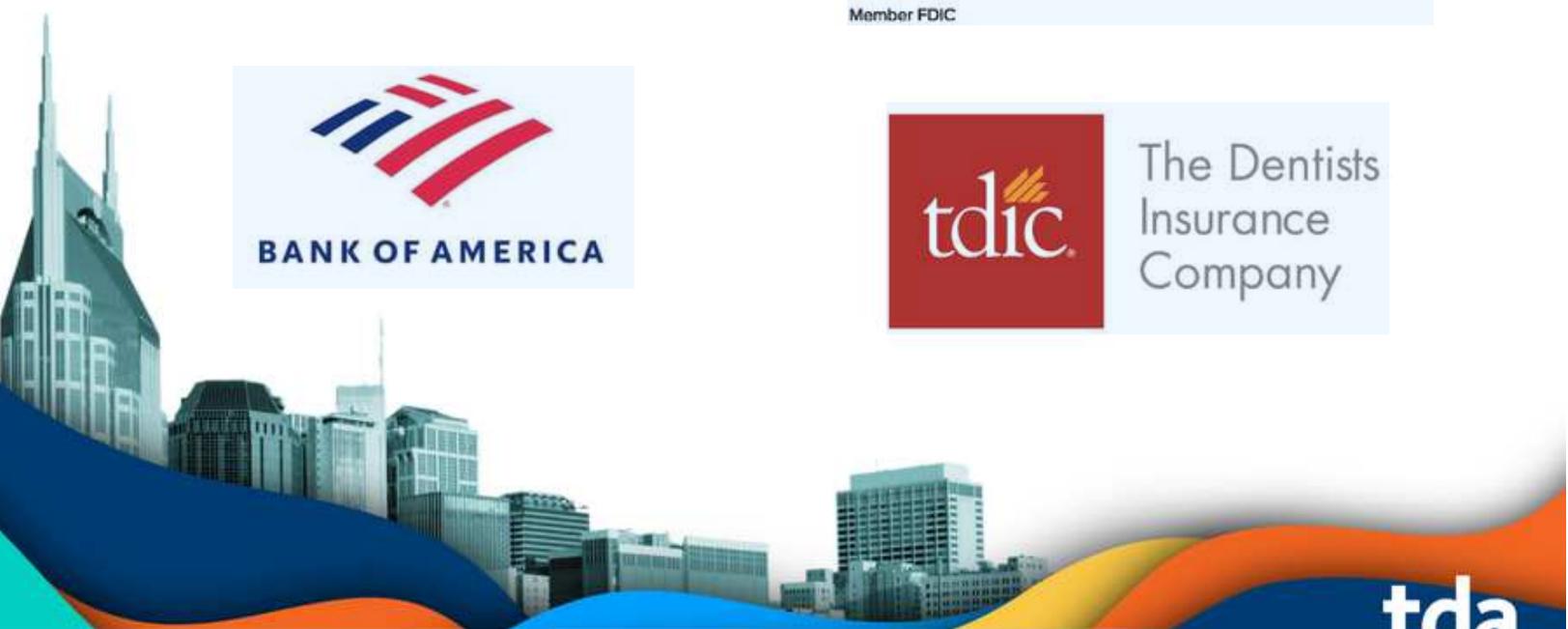
[REGISTER NOW](#)





MUSIC CITY DENTAL CONFERENCE

THANK YOU TO OUR 2025 SPONSORS!



THANK You! FOR BEING A MEMBER!

The ADA, TDA, and your local component are committed to supporting your personal and professional growth at every stage of your career.

We offer a wide range of resources to help you manage your patients, practice, and personal life more effectively. Whether it's staying informed on the latest clinical guidelines or accessing financial management tools like insurance and retirement plans, we're here to provide everything you need to succeed and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

If there's anything we can do to further support your membership experience, please don't hesitate to reach out at 615.628.0208 or email us at tda@tndental.org. We'd love to hear from you!

The TDA welcomes the following dentists as our new and reinstated members.

Second District Dental Society
Dr. Douglas Andreasen
Dr. Morgan Capwell

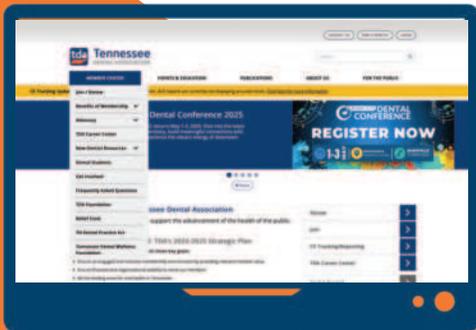
Chattanooga Area Dental Society
Dr. Jacqueline Brown
Dr. Scott Jackson

Fourth District Dental Society
Dr. David Norris

Nashville Dental Society
Dr. Oluyemi Falaiya
Dr. David Mott
Dr. Thomas Keeling

Eighth District Dental Society
Dr. Kirolos Gerges
Dr. Rachel Stein

Memphis Dental Society
Dr. Austin Tolbert

TENNESSEE
DENTAL
ASSOCIATION NEWS

INSTAGRAM

 TNDentalAssn

LINKEDIN

 TNDentalAssn

FACEBOOK

 TennesseeDental Association

TNDENTAL.ORG

Dental Lifeline Network • Tennessee

Donated Dental Services (DDS) Program Highlights

February 2025



Dental Lifeline
Network • Tennessee

For more information go to dentallifeline.org or contact a DLN • TN Leadership Council member

William Powell, DDS, MS (Chair)

Paul E. Honeycutt, DDS
G. Mitchell Baldree, DDS
Jeannie Beauchamp, DDS
Josh Clendenin
John Coulter, DDS
Andrea Hayes, CAE
Fred Heros, DDS
G. Robert Hopper, DDS
K. Michael Lamb, DDS
Ryan LaPrad, CBI
Steven Nowlin, DDS
John Sullivan, DDS

Or contact TN DDS Coordinator

Lindsay Harold, DDS Coordinator
615.983.2601 | 888.286.3121 (fax)
lharold@DentalLifeline.org

Dental Lifeline Network is grateful for the Tennessee Dental Association's partnership in developing the Donated Dental Services (DDS) program in 2007, and for its long-time support of helping people with disabilities or who are elderly or medically fragile and have no other access to dental care.

A generous network of Tennessee dentists and labs have donated over \$4.2 million worth of comprehensive treatment to 848 people. Thank you! **More volunteers are needed statewide, if you would like to get help, please visit WhyIDental.org or scan the QR code below.**

Donated Dental Services (DDS) Program Totals

	7/1/24-1/31/2025	7/1/23-6/30/24
Patient Treatment		
Patients Served ¹	71	98
Patients on Waitlist	44	36
Volunteer Dentists	175	183
Volunteer Labs in TN	54	54
Participating Labs outside TN	5	14
Financial		
Value of Care to Patients Treated ²	\$193,698	\$314,324
Average Value of Treatment/Case ³	\$5,919	\$6,250
Value of Donated Lab Services	\$12,456	\$23,002
Since Program Inception (2007)		
Total Patients Treated	855	
Total Value of Care to Patients Treated	\$4,335,041	

¹Donated treatment value includes donated lab value

²Average value is based on patients that have completed comprehensive treatment; it does not include active patients, or patients who continue to receive ongoing care from their DDS volunteer.

³Number of Patients Served includes patients who completed their treatment plan, patients who received services, but treatment plan is not yet complete, and patients who are linked with a volunteer but haven't yet received treatment.

The Tennessee DDS Program helps people like Michael, 46, who lives in Rutherford County. He had a stroke two years ago and suffers from a number of chronic conditions. In addition, he underwent treatment for throat cancer many years ago and the medications contributed to significant tooth decay. Nearly all of Michael's teeth were broken at the gumline and he experienced chronic infections. Eating was difficult and Michael's diet was severely limited. Michael felt that his dental health impacted every aspect of his life in a negative way.



Michael desperately needed help with his deteriorating dental condition but sadly could not afford treatment. Unable to work, he survives on his limited Social Security Disability benefit that is consumed by his monthly living expenses, leaving nothing left over for dental treatment. It seemed he had nowhere to turn for help.

Thankfully, two generous DDS volunteers came to Michael's aid. A general dentist extracted his remaining teeth and root tips and partnered with a dental laboratory to donate full upper and lower dentures. Thanks to this caring team, Michael received thousands of dollars in donated treatment that relieved his pain and restored his dental health!



GET INVOLVED

Visit DentalLifeline.org
or contact
Lindsay Harold, TN DDS Coordinator
Direct | (615) 983-2601 Fax | (888) 286-3121
lharold@dentallifeline.org



Dental Lifeline
Network • Tennessee

CONNECT WITH US

 @DentalLifeline



TDA FOUNDATION

GIFTS GIVEN TO HONOR OR MEMORIALIZE

FEBRUARY 2025

IN HONOR OF:

Dr. William High
By Dr. Eric Himmelreich

Allen Hunley
By Dr. Grayson Hunley

Dr. Rhett Raum
By Dr. Edward Kirkpatrick

Dr. Billy McCann
By Dr. John Sullivan

IN MEMORY OF:

Dr. Richard Berryman
By Dr. G Robert Hopper

Dr. William Greer
By Dr. Michael Johnson

Dr. Joe Mosier
By Dr. John Petty

Dr. Tom Patterson
By Dr. G Robert Hopper

Dr. Morris Robbins
By Dr. John Sullivan



IN MEMORIAM

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

Dr. Richard Berry

Dr. Richard Berry was a member of the American Dental Association, the Tennessee Dental Association, and the Seventh District Dental Society.

Dr. Thomas Patterson

Dr. Thomas Patterson was a member of the American Dental Association, the Tennessee Dental Association, and the Memphis 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) 741-3011

Tennessee Dental Association

(615) 628-0208 | Fax: (615) 628-0214

tda@tndental.org

COMPONENT SOCIETIES

First District Dental Society

Executive Director: Savannah Bolick

(423) 552-0222

firstdistrictdental@gmail.com

Second District Dental Society

Executive Director: Janet Lawlor

(865) 919-6464

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

Seventh District Dental Society

Executive Secretary: Dr. Larry Chambers

(731) 217-5614

7thdistrictdental@gmail.com

Eighth District Dental Society

Executive Secretary: Ruby Batson

(931) 245-3333

Memphis Dental Society

Executive Director: Katie Nelson

(901) 682-4928

info@memphisdentalsociety.org



WORKING OUT TO STAY SHARP

CAN EXERCISE KEEP YOUR BRAIN HEALTHIER?



We've all heard that exercise is good for us. Experts recommend getting at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week. This can include brisk walking, biking, playing tennis, or even pushing a lawnmower. Strength training exercises, like lifting weights, push-ups, or sit-ups, are recommended for at least two days a week.

Many benefits of exercise are well known. Aerobic exercise can help you maintain a healthy weight by burning fat. It can also keep your heart healthy. Strength training can help to build muscle mass and strengthen your bones. Stretching can improve flexibility and range of motion. And balance exercises can prevent falls. Scientists are finding out that exercise may also improve our brain health.

Research has shown that when you exercise, many different molecules are released into your bloodstream. These molecules travel to different organs and tissues, where they trigger changes that help your cells withstand the physical stress of exercise.

"You're basically telling your body, 'You need to prepare for something,'" explains Dr. Saul Villeda, who studies the aging brain at the University of California, San Francisco. In

preparing to withstand exercise, cells also seem to get better at withstanding the effects of aging.

As we age, our cognitive abilities often start to decline. We may have difficulty with learning and memory. That's because our brains undergo cellular changes as we get older. The protective barrier around the brain also changes, altering which substances can get into your brain. Some of these have potentially harmful effects.

Studies in mice and rats have shown that exercise can partially offset these changes. And it can prevent at least some of the cognitive decline that occurs with age. These benefits haven't just been seen in mice, either. Research has also shown a link between aerobic exercise and better memory in people.

Certain exercise-induced molecules have been shown to boost cognitive functions in mice. Villeda and colleagues are studying one called GPLD1. They've found that it's at least partly responsible for why exercise improves new brain cell formation, learning, and memory in aged mice.



Don't be discouraged if the recommended amount of exercise seems overwhelming. It's okay to start small. "A little bit goes a long way," Villeda says. "Even just moving a few minutes extra that you wouldn't have done already has a benefit." He notes that his research findings have motivated him to start exercising, which he didn't do before.

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



WISE CHOICES

Making Exercise Part of Your Routine

Get active with others. Find a neighbor, family member, or friend that shares your goals.

Join a team, an exercise group, or class.

Keep track of your progress. Use an activity log or a fitness tracker. This can help you to set goals and stay motivated.

Find ways to make exercise more fun. Dance, listen to music while you exercise, or do a combination of activities to keep you from getting bored.

Do what you can. Even five minutes of activity is better than none.

BUILDING DENTAL REVENUE CYCLE MANAGEMENT CONFIDENCE

By **ROBERT MCDERMOTT** | President & CEO, iCoreConnect

For many dentists, the clinical side is second nature, but when it comes to the business side—particularly managing dental RCM—it's easy to feel overwhelmed.

Navigating insurance claims, tracking payments, and ensuring a steady cash flow can seem like a far cry from what you learned in dental school. But the good news is, mastering RCM doesn't have to be intimidating. With the right strategies and tools, you can build confidence in managing your practice's finances and focus on what you do best: caring for your patients.

RCM refers to the entire financial process a dental practice uses to track patient care and involves a series of steps from patient scheduling and insurance verification to claims submission, payment posting, and managing outstanding balances. This process is crucial for maintaining a healthy cash flow in a practice by ensuring services provided are appropriately billed and paid for in a timely manner.

Unlike clinical dentistry, which is the core of dental training, dentists often lack formal education in financial

management and business operations. This lack of familiarity can make the nuances of RCM—such as understanding dental insurance coding, claims submission, and reimbursement timelines—seem like a maze. Missteps in these areas can lead to costly errors, delayed payments, and significant cash flow issues that jeopardize the sustainability of a practice.

Additionally, the evolving landscape of dental insurance adds another layer of complexity. Navigating the differences between in-network and out-of-network reimbursements, handling patient co-pays, and understanding denial management can feel like an endless administrative burden.

Unfortunately, a poorly managed RCM system can create backlogs in billing, leading to frustration for both the practice and the patients. Patients may experience delays in receiving accurate bills, face confusion over what they owe, or even deal with surprise bills months after treatment. This not only damages patient trust but also makes it harder for the practice to retain loyal patients.





In contrast, when RCM is optimized, the administrative side of the practice runs smoothly, reducing stress for both the dentist and the team. This allows more focus on patient care rather than chasing down payments or dealing with insurance disputes.

Further, a streamlined RCM process ensures patients experience fewer billing errors, quicker insurance processing, and transparent communication about their financial responsibility. As a result, patients are more satisfied with their overall experience, and the practice builds a reputation for efficiency and reliability.

Fortunately, adopting the right strategies makes it possible to streamline these processes and reduce the anxiety associated with managing the business side of a practice.

1. Invest in the Right RCM Software

Technology plays a critical role in simplifying RCM. Invest in comprehensive dental RCM software that automates routine tasks like appointment scheduling, insurance verification, and claim submission. The right software provides real-time analytics, allowing you to monitor the financial health of your practice with ease. Automation also reduces the chances of human error, reducing claim denials and helping to ensure payments are received on time.

2. Understand Dental Insurance Plans

Dental insurance can be complicated, and each plan has its own set of rules regarding reimbursement and coverage. To confidently manage RCM, it's important to understand the various insurance plans your practice accepts and how they impact your revenue. This knowledge will allow you to communicate effectively with both insurers and patients about coverage, co-pays, and out-of-pocket costs, minimizing billing issues.

When this knowledge is paired with automated insurance verification, you can be sure your patients are getting the care they need and deserve, communication is clear regarding coverage, and your practice is reimbursed for services in a timely manner.

3. Prioritize Patient Communication

Clear and consistent communication with patients about their financial responsibilities is vital. Before treatments, provide detailed cost estimates, explain insurance coverage, and outline payment options. Automated insurance verifications can help you complete these tasks and schedule procedures and treatments before the next appointment, knowing those items are already covered.

When patients are well-informed about what they owe and when, they are more likely to make timely payments. This transparency builds trust and can reduce the number of outstanding balances.

4. Stay Updated on Industry Changes

Dental billing regulations and insurance policies are constantly evolving. It's important to stay informed about changes in dental coding, insurance reimbursements, and healthcare laws that could affect your practice. Subscribe to dental industry newsletters, attend relevant webinars, and network with peers to keep up with the latest developments. Also, an automated insurance verification solution can help ensure you've got the most up-to-date patient benefit information.

With these strategies, dentists, especially those in solo practice, can take control of their RCM processes with confidence, ensuring their practices remain financially sound while providing excellent patient care.

TDA endorses several dental RCM tools provided by iCoreConnect including iCoreVerify, iCoreClaims, and iCorePay. These tools help integrate and streamline the entire RCM process taking the pressure off you and your staff, allowing you to focus on patient care. [Click here to book a demo](#), or call 888.801.7706. Member discounts apply!

BOOK A DEMO

NEW DENTIST CORNER



Building trust across borders: The power of cultural sensitivity in dentistry



In today's rapidly evolving world, cultural diversity shapes health care practices globally. Dentistry is no exception. As dental professionals, we encounter patients from diverse backgrounds, each bringing unique beliefs, perspectives and expectations to their care. To truly offer patient-centered service, it's important to understand and respect these differences — an approach known as cultural competence. This not only enhances patient outcomes but also strengthens trust, loyalty and the overall success of a practice.

Cultural competence goes beyond overcoming language barriers; it's about understanding a patient's beliefs regarding health care, communication styles and medical advice. The goal isn't just knowledge — it's connection. Understanding the individual is paramount. While knowing cultural norms is valuable, what really matters is engaging with patients on a personal level. Reading body language, listening attentively and recognizing individual values allow us to address their dental needs and the root

causes of their concerns. By seeing each patient as a unique person, dentists build trusting relationships that promote genuine care and satisfaction.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES FOR APPLYING CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Imagine a patient hesitating to follow a recommended treatment because of cultural or religious beliefs. Without cultural competence, this could be misunderstood as disinterest. Understanding their perspective allows us to offer solutions that align with their values — building trust and ensuring compliance.

In my experience leading a community-focused patient group in San Diego, I faced challenges with patient consent forms. In certain cultures, managing a family member's health care is a sign of commitment. This conflicted with privacy regulations, causing frustration. Understanding this dynamic and bridging the gap improved patient satisfaction and trust while respecting professional responsibilities.

Around the world, traditional practices like herbal remedies or acupuncture hold significant influence. Patients may turn to these treatments before seeking modern dental care. Respecting these practices and educating patients on how contemporary treatments can complement, rather than replace, their traditions is crucial for building trust.

Similarly, practices such as religious fasting

influence when and how patients prefer to receive dental care. Offering flexible scheduling during these periods is a small but powerful gesture that shows respect and builds loyalty. Additionally, understanding cultural preferences for physical contact (e.g., handshaking) or requests for same-gender providers is essential. Accommodating these preferences when possible demonstrates a genuine commitment to respecting patients' beliefs and comfort.

NAVIGATING COMMUNICATION AND BEHAVIOR DIFFERENCES WITHOUT STEREOTYPING

Cultural sensitivity is essential, but avoiding stereotypes is crucial. Not every patient from a specific background shares the same beliefs. We must approach each patient as an individual, asking thoughtful questions and actively listening rather than assuming based on background. This ensures care remains respectful, personalized and inclusive.

It's also worth noting that, due to cultural sensitivities, some patients might behave differently when interacting with health care providers from outside their own culture. For instance, some may feel more comfortable discussing certain issues with a provider from a different background. This behavior, often rooted in maintaining privacy within their community, should not be seen as unusual. Instead, health care professionals should recognize it as an opportunity to build trust and support the patient's needs.

“Cultural sensitivity is **essential**, but avoiding stereotypes is crucial.”

Cultural competence also includes recognizing different communication styles. Some cultures express emotions more openly, which could be misinterpreted. Being aware of these differences and interpreting them correctly can help enhance the patient experience.

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY: A TOOL TO ENRICH, NOT COMPLICATE, DENTAL PRACTICE COMPETENCE

Embracing cultural diversity doesn't complicate our practice; it enhances it. By listening, respecting and adapting to different cultural norms, we strengthen the patient-dentist relationship, leading to better health outcomes and greater patient loyalty. Cultural sensitivity enriches our ability to connect with others, offering insights that make us not just better

practitioners but also more empathetic individuals.

Cultural sensitivity isn't limited to the dentist, however; it's a team effort. Front office staff, dental assistants and hygienists are often the first point of contact and must understand these nuances as well.

KEY SKILLS TO BUILD CULTURAL COMPETENCE

- **Active listening:** Focus on understanding patients' concerns by asking open-ended questions, such as "How do you feel about this treatment?" This approach encourages patients to share their perspectives, helping tailor care while building trust.
- **Role-playing in team meetings:** Quarterly role-playing sessions addressing

real-life cultural scenarios enhance team awareness and equip staff with strategies for respectful patient interactions.

- **Patient feedback:** Collect feedback through surveys or casual conversations. Asking "How was your visit today?" provides insights without focusing on culture, yet still improves the patient experience.
- **Continuing education:** Incorporate cultural competence courses into your CE plan, enhancing cross-cultural communication and patient care skills with programs focusing on diverse populations.
- **Mentorship and professional groups:** Engaging with mentors or professional groups offers valuable strategies and practical knowledge for treating diverse patient populations.

A COMMITMENT TO LEARNING AND GROWTH

In 2016, I participated in a cultural training program where professionals like myself worked one on one with health care, education and law enforcement public service leaders. These leaders shared challenges in interacting with people from my culture, such as confusion around the cost of health care and emergency services. I helped them understand these cultural differences, improving their ability

to serve diverse communities and emphasizing the importance of cultural sensitivity, particularly in health care.

Cultural competence isn't about knowing everything; it's about being open to learning from each interaction. Dentists and their teams can create an environment that respects diversity while delivering high-quality care by listening actively, respecting diverse beliefs and maintaining an open dialogue. Cultural sensitivity builds trust across borders, leading to

better long-term health outcomes and a more inclusive, patient-centered approach to dentistry.

For those interested in learning more, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health offers a free online program for dental professionals that helps equip them with the knowledge, skills and awareness to best deliver oral health services to all patients, regardless of cultural or linguistic background.

This article originally appeared on Nov. 19, 2024, in the ADA New Dentist Blog, newdentistblog.ada.org.

Muhlab Al Sammarraie, D.D.S., originally from Baghdad, is the site dental director at AltaMed Health Services, one of the nation's largest federally qualified health centers. Recognized as a 2023 ADA 10 Under 10 Award winner and an Incisal Edge magazine 40 Under 40 Top Dentist in America for 2023, he serves as an international lecturer at Universidad De La Salle Bajio and a preceptor for Tufts University School of Dental Medicine students. Dr. Al Sammarraie was also a delegate to the 2024 ADA House of Delegates. Beyond dentistry, he helps war victims and displaced individuals in Iraq access education and medical care.



CHOICESM

A National Practice Transitions, LLC Company

Sell Your Dental Practice with Choice Transitions

- ✓ Fees on Traditional Sales as Low as 3%
- ✓ Simple & Short-Term Contracts
- ✓ Commission Free Sales to DSOs
- ✓ Free Valuation

Over \$642,000,000 in Sales and Growing!

(877) 365-6786

www.choicetransitions.com



AFTCO

TRANSITION CONSULTANTS
Since 1968

We are pleased to announce...

Scottie Reagan, D.D.S.
has acquired the practice of
Walter S. Tipton, D.D.S.
Jefferson City, Tennessee

Logan Schmidt, D.D.S.
has acquired the practice of
G. Robert Hopper, Jr., D.D.S.
Jackson, Tennessee

Call today for a
FREE MARKET VALUE ANALYSIS
(\$5,000 value)

*We are pleased to have
assisted in this transition.*

800.232.3826

www.AFTCO.net

Practice Sales & Purchases Over \$3.5 Billion



DO YOU HAVE ENOUGH
**INCOME
PROTECTION?**

Relying solely on an individual disability policy may leave gaps in your coverage. Our group disability plan stacks on top of your existing individual policy to protect even more of your income.

- ✓ Guaranteed issue
- ✓ No proof of health or finances required
- ✓ Leading carrier of disability insurance for dentists
- ✓ Optional professional liability premium reimbursement

Contact us for more details and a quote.

tda Insurance
AGENCY, INC.

800.347.1109
tdainsurance.com

Classifieds

Advertisers, please note openings for dentists and staff have moved to the TDA Career Center. Please visit tda.careerwebsite.com to find your next great hire.

PRACTICE FOR SALE

Choice Transitions currently has several practices for sale. From smaller/starter practices ideal for more recent grads all the way to large, multi-doctor practices! Our inventory is constantly changing as practices sell and new practices are listed. To investigate these opportunities please visit and register for FREE on our website at www.choicetransitions.com or Contact Jay Lowery at 205-855-2104.

Excellent opportunity for a new dentist to purchase a practice, assume lease for a 4 op practice located in a strip mall. Practice is located in Covington, TN, 30 miles north of Memphis. 1600 sq ft fully plumbed with cabinetry. Retired dentist will include all equipment, instruments and supplies. Large factory present. Please fax your contact info 901-476-0008 or call 901-451-7675



PLACE YOUR
**CLASSIFIED
AD** in our next issue!



PRESERVE YOUR LEGACY. SECURE YOUR FUTURE.

Your dental practice is more than a business—it's your legacy. At Henry Schein Dental Practice Transitions, we specialize in helping practice owners with seamless, stress-free transitions tailored to personal, professional, and financial goals.

Why Choose Us for Your Practice Transition?

- Unlock your practice's true value with expert, data-driven valuations to unlock your practice's true value
- Gain access to 36,000+ purchasers
- Full-service support from your first consultation to final closing
- Unmatched expertise backed by local insights and deep industry connections
- Over 500 closings with over \$400MM in sales price since 2023.



Start your journey to a rewarding retirement today.

Contact me to schedule a complimentary consultation.

Scott Owen

Transition Sales Consultant

678-523-1474

Scott.Owen@henryschein.com



HENRY SCHEIN®
DENTAL PRACTICE TRANSITIONS



TDA Services provides members with exclusive discounts and special offers on a broad selection of products and services tailored to both professional and personal needs. By taking advantage of our partnerships, you'll not only enjoy significant savings but also contribute to expanding member benefits. Remember to mention your TDA membership when reaching out to these providers. Start saving today!

ADA[®] Visa[®] Card

ADA Credit Cards – Exclusively endorsed for ADA Members. Learn more or call US Bank, (866) 472-6423 ext. 37385.



CareCredit – Patient Payment Plans. Learn more or call 1-800-300-3046, ext. 4519 (new) or 800-859-9975 (existing).



AHI Travel – Guided tours across the globe. Learn more or call 844-205-1171.

classpass

ClassPass – On demand or in-person fitness options to get you moving. Learn more or call 800-621-8099.

bento

Bento – A modern alternative to dental benefits. Learn more, email smile@bento.net or call 800.734.8484



Compliance Group - OSHA compliance management and tracking software. Learn more or call 855.854.4722 ext. 514.



Best Card – Credit card merchant processing services. Learn more or call 877-739-3952.



Cyracom – Interpretation and translation services. Learn more, call 1-844-737-0781 or email getstarted@cyracom.com.

Easyrefine

REFINING EXCELLENCE

D-MMEX Easyrefine – Scrap metal recovery program. Learn more or call 1-800-741-3174.



GE Appliances – Savings on select GE appliances.
Learn more.



HealthFirst – Emergency medical kits.
Learn more or call 888-963-6787.

HealthFirst – Sharps management.
Learn more or call 888-963-6787.



iCoreConnect - secure cloud-based software for increased revenue & improved workflow.
Learn more or book your demo today by calling 888.810.7706.



Lands' End Business – Customized apparel for you and your staff. Learn more or call 1-800-490-6402.



Laurel Road – Student loan refinancing.
Learn more or call 855-277-6771.



Lenovo – PC products and accessories.
Learn more or call 800-426-7235 ext. 4886.



Medical Protective – Malpractice Insurance – Learn more or call TDA Insurance Agency, 1-800-347-1109.



Mercedes-Benz – Savings on new and used vehicles.
Learn more or call Call 866-628-7232.



Office Depot – Office essentials. Learn more.



On-Pay – Payroll solutions software.
Learn more or 1-877-328-6505.



TDA Insurance Agency, Inc. – Personal & business insurance programs. Learn more or call 1-800-347-1109.



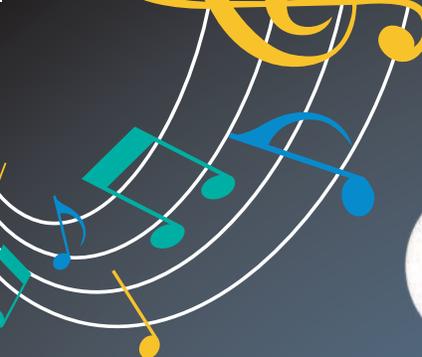
Threadfellows: Branded gear and apparel.
Learn more or call 1-844-313-7005.



UPS: Efficient shipping solutions. Learn more or call 1-800-MEMBERS (800-636-2377).



Volvo: Savings on sustainable vehicles.
Learn more or call 1-800-550-5658.



MUSIC CITY DENTAL CONFERENCE

SPEAKER :
SHANNON BRINKER PACE



SPEAKER :
DR. BRIAN HARRIS



SPEAKER :
DR. DEBRA GOFF



REGISTER NOW

MUSICCITYDENTALCONFERENCE.COM



1-3 MAY



RENAISSANCE
NASHVILLE HOTEL



NASHVILLE
TENNESSEE

PRESENTED BY
TENNESSEE DENTAL ASSOCIATION

