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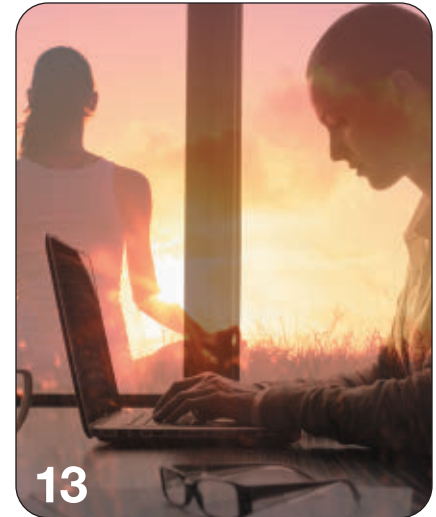
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Difficult Conversations



By Bruce Burton,
DMD, MAGD, ABGD

A DIFFICULT OR CRUCIAL CONVERSATION IS A

discussion between two or more people where stakes are high, opinions vary, and emotions run strong.

They are about conflicting perceptions, interpretations, and values.

Some key things to remember about having a difficult conversation are to remember that people most often never change without first feeling understood. This requires listening with open and honest curiosity about another person. An example might be saying, "Tell me more and help me understand better." Or "I can understand that. I value you."

Someone's intentions are invisible. Assuming we know them is dangerous. Be curious, not judgmental. Make sure the intention of the conversation is not interrogation. You are not trying to force the person to provide information or expose them in a negative light. The intention is to gather information that helps to understand the person's reasoning, beliefs, feelings, and behavior.

To have a difficult conversation, you need to make sure the person is not feeling trapped, or that you are disguising your judgement of them. To avoid this, ask about the meaning of specific words the person uses. Ask them about your assumptions. Ask them about their motives.

Remember, for the person to believe that you sincerely want to hear them and resolve whatever the issue is, you must be aware of your tone of voice and body language.

For tone of voice, avoid harsh, sarcastic, or falsely sweet responses. Use a gentle, neutral voice that

comes down at the end of your sentences.

For body language, avoid frowning, raising eyebrows, wrinkling forehead, shaking head and shrugging. Stay relaxed, calm, and relatively still.

When having a difficult conversation, you want the listener to hear the question while feeling respected. You want to disarm their defenses and get them to open up. You are trying to avoid making the listener feel trapped and defensive.

Mel Robbins has four techniques for staying focused on the difficult conversation and not letting it be hijacked by our emotion.¹

- 1) Always start by acknowledging your responsibility, maybe because you had avoided dealing with the issue. By taking responsibility, you are defusing the person's emotions. Also, you are honoring them. It sets a more level field for things when you get to the more difficult part of the conversation.
- 2) Have a goal. Make sure you have a defined outcome before going into a conversation. The conversation will be a rollercoaster, with both parties having emotions triggered. Stabilizing your thoughts will be the outcome you achieve.
- 3) Listen and validate. Say what you need to say, and then listen and validate what the person is saying. For example, "That must be tough to deal with. I totally get the reason for that, and if I felt the same way I would probably do the same thing as you."
- 4) Always come back to restating the outcome you want. It will not be easy because your emotions will be triggered.

Think about rehearsing with a friend to help separate emotions from what you want the outcome to be. I find it extremely helpful when I need to have a difficult conversation to use this work sheet before having it:

DIFFICULT CONVERSATION WORKSHEET

- 1) WHAT IS THE ISSUE? Example:
Is there an expectation that is not being met? Is there a performance issue? Be as specific as possible.
- 2) HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE SITUATION?
- 3) WHY DO YOU WANT TO HAVE THE CONVERSATION?
- 4) WHAT DO YOU WANT AS A RESULT OF THE CONVERSATION?
List as many things as you can think of.
- 5) WHAT DO YOU NOT WANT AS A RESULT OF THE CONVERSATION?
List as many things as you can think of.
- 6) WHAT IS YOUR PART IN THE ISSUE? WHERE ARE YOU RESPONSIBLE?
- 7) GIVE WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL – HOW CAN YOU START OFF THE CONVERSATION SHOWING THAT YOU MEAN WELL – THAT YOU HAVE A POSITIVE INTENT?
- 8) WHAT ACTION WILL YOU TAKE TO ENSURE THAT THE ISSUE IS RESOLVED?

Difficult conversations are a lot like dealing with emergencies. The more you prepare, the better the chance of keeping your emotion under control and staying focused on a good outcome. ●

Reference

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=GeZU5JgomiE>



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Merry
Christmas

O'Brien
DENTAL LAB

Events & Education

Component CE Calendar

CONTINUING
EDUCATION

Calendar provided by Mehdi Salari, DMD

This calendar is current as of December 6, 2024

Please visit the host dental society website for the most up-to-date information.

Date	Dental Society	Course or Event Title	Speaker	CE	Location	More Information
01/09/25	Coastal Cascades	Cultural Competency	Kelly Ngariki	2	Corvallis (Community Center – Willow Room)	Register: www.bit.ly/LCDSEVENTBRITE
01/17/25	Multnomah & Washington	Medical Emergencies/ Nitrous	Steve Beadnell, DMD	4	Portland Golf Club	Info/Register: www.multnomahdental.org
01/17/25	Multnomah & Washington	OSHA Update	Monica Monsanto	2	Portland Golf Club	Info/Register: www.multnomahdental.org
01/28/25	Clackamas County	Required CE- Medical Emergencies & N2O	Steve Beadnell, DMD	4	Oregon City (PWFC)	RSVP to executivedirector@clackamasdental.com
02/11/25	Coastal Cascades	Winter Meeting	-	-	TBD	
02/21/25	Coastal Cascades	Medical Emergencies	Dr. Sam Bae	4	Corvallis (Community Center – Willow Room)	Register: www.bit.ly/LCDSEVENTBRITE
02/25/25	Clackamas County	Pediatrics	TBD	2	Oregon City (PWFC)	RSVP to executivedirector@clackamasdental.com
03/13/25	Coastal Cascades	Oral Ulcerations: What is Eating You?	Dr. Bryan Trump	2	Corvallis Community Center	Register: www.bit.ly/LCDSEVENTBRITE
03/14/25	Coastal Cascades	Hands-on Biopsy Principles	Dr. Bryan Trump	3	Eugene (Lane Community College)	Register: www.bit.ly/LCDSEVENTBRITE
03/18/25	Clackamas County	Cultural Competency	TBD	2	Oregon City (PWFC)	RSVP to executivedirector@clackamasdental.com
03/20/25	Multnomah	Social Event	-	-	TBD	Info/Register: www.multnomahdental.org
05/01/25	Coastal Cascades	The Latest & Greatest in Pediatric Dentistry	Dr. Greg Psaltis	2	Corvallis Community Center	Register: www.bit.ly/LCDSEVENTBRITE
05/02/25	Coastal Cascades	Refreshing your Pediatric Dental Knowledge & Skills	Dr. Greg Psaltis	6	Eugene (Lane Community College)	Register: www.bit.ly/LCDSEVENTBRITE
05/21/25	Multnomah	Annual Meeting/ Table Clinics	TBA	2	TBD	Info/Register: www.multnomahdental.org
05/27/25	Clackamas County	Annual Meeting- Election of Officers	TBD		Oregon City (PWFC)	RSVP to executivedirector@clackamasdental.com

Find this calendar online at www.oregondental.org. Click “Meetings & Events” > “Calendar of Events”.

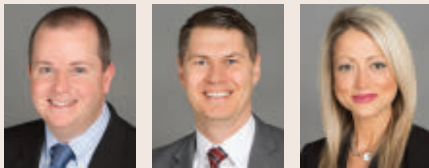
Looking for additional ways to get CE? The American Dental Association has a large collection of webinars and on-demand video learning opportunities available, many of which are free to members. Visit adaceonline.org to catch up on the latest offerings on your own schedule. 🎧

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Board of Trustees Meeting Highlights

Oregon Dental Association
Board of Trustees Meeting
Friday, September 13, 2024

- Dr. Brad Hester was elected, and Dr. Rene Watts, Ms. Jill Everwin, and Mr. Steve McNannay were re-elected to their terms on the Moda Holdings Group Board of Directors.
- Ms. Amber Fowler gave an update on the Dental Foundation of Oregon and Tooth Taxi 2.0.
- Drs. Anthony Ramos and Thomas Pollard were re-elected to the Dental Foundation of Oregon Board of Directors.
- The Board approved listing the ODA building in Wilsonville for sale, and retaining Matthew-Kidder as the listing firm.
- The Board approved the 2025 ODA budget.
- After the ODA legislative report, Dr. Alanson Randol gave a presentation in regard to the Alabama hygiene education model.
- The Board approved ODA Endorsement Guidelines.
- After a report of the Insurance Agency Task Force by Dr. Mark Mutschler, Executive Director Dr. Barry Taylor reported on the newly signed three-year endorsement of TDIC. ●

Unlock Savings and Rewards: Join the Best Card Promotion!

THE OREGON DENTAL ASSOCIATION has partnered with Best Card, the ODA-endorsed payment processor, to offer an exclusive opportunity for you, our members! From now until June 30, 2025, ODA dental practices can unlock special savings and rewards just by signing up with Best Card. When you qualify, you'll receive a \$100 Amazon gift card from the ODA plus an additional \$25 Amazon gift card directly from Best Card! This promotion is our way of thanking you for choosing a partner that's committed to the success of dental practices.

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Thriving in Seven Dimensions: Expanding Concepts of Wellbeing

By Julie Spaniel,
DDS, FICD, FACD

“NEVER LET THEM SEE YOU SWEAT.”

“When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” These phrases epitomize the resilience valued in the 1960s and 1970s, when self-sufficiency and independence were highly prized. During that era, the concept of wellness was primarily focused on physical health—eating well and following exercise routines, often inspired by TV fitness icons like Jack LaLanne. Mental and emotional health, however, were rarely discussed.

In today’s dental profession, navigating the complexities of modern workplaces and societal expectations requires considering all seven dimensions of wellbeing. To provide the highest level of care to our

patients, dentists must prioritize their own comprehensive wellness.

The American Dental Association’s 2024 Trend Report has brought attention to the increasing levels of stress within the dental profession. Stress is becoming the new norm in our post-pandemic world, with 82% of dentists reporting significant stress related to their work. Major contributors include workforce shortages, insurance reimbursement challenges, career burnout, and difficult patient interactions. In this demanding climate, self-care is more important than ever, encompassing multiple dimensions of wellbeing:

- **Intellectual wellness**
- **Emotional wellness**



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- **Physical wellness**
- **Spiritual wellness**
- **Social wellness**
- **Environmental wellness**
- **Occupational wellness**

Intellectual Wellness

Intellectual wellness involves cultivating curiosity and embracing new ideas and experiences. This dimension encourages dentists to expand their skills and knowledge through both personal and professional development. Participation in community and cultural activities, as well as personal hobbies, can enrich intellectual wellbeing. While continuing education for clinical skills is essential, exploring non-clinical interests can foster a broader sense of fulfillment.

Emotional Wellness

Emotional wellness includes self-awareness and the ability to navigate life's challenges. It is crucial for dentists to recognize and manage their emotions and adapt to stress and change. The dental profession often involves emotionally demanding situations, from leading teams to managing patient anxieties. Dentists must be mindful of their boundaries and aware of their roles as leaders. Additionally, understanding and addressing emotional stress—and knowing when to seek professional support—is key. Emotional wellness is intricately linked to physical health and can significantly impact overall wellbeing.

Physical Wellness

Physical wellness encompasses more than regular exercise. It includes practices such as balanced nutrition, sufficient sleep, and the avoidance of harmful habits. In dentistry, maintaining physical wellness means paying attention to ergonomics while working. Proper posture, magnification, and adequate lighting can reduce the risk of repetitive strain injuries. Protecting hand and wrist health and managing exposure to loud environments to preserve hearing are also critical for a sustainable career.

Spiritual Wellness

Spiritual wellness refers to a sense of higher consciousness and the belief in something greater than oneself. This may or may not involve religious beliefs. It is a personal concept that supports the ability to set boundaries, accept circumstances beyond our control, and align with personal morals and ethics. Embracing spiritual wellness can provide dentists with a source of resilience and peace.

Social Wellness

Social wellness emphasizes building and maintaining supportive relationships and a sense of community. For dentists, fostering connections both within and outside the workplace contributes to a balanced life. Engaging in social activities and nurturing friendships can alleviate the isolation that sometimes accompanies the profession.



**JULIE SPANIEL,
DDS, FICD, FACD**

ODA Wellness
Committee Chair

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Environmental Wellness

Environmental wellness involves creating and sustaining surroundings that support health and wellbeing. For dental professionals, this can mean maintaining a positive and safe workspace that promotes efficiency and comfort. Attention to factors such as air quality, noise levels, and the overall office atmosphere can enhance both personal and team wellbeing.

Occupational Wellness

Occupational wellness pertains to finding satisfaction and meaning in one's work. For dentists, this involves balancing professional responsibilities with personal fulfillment. Ensuring that workplace goals align with personal values and fostering a sense of achievement are essential for long-term career satisfaction.

Addressing challenges such as work-life balance, managing stress, and preventing burnout is crucial.

Our newly installed President of the American Dental Association, Dr. Brett Kessler, has made dentist wellbeing his primary focus. "Wellness is where it starts." The ADA has made significant strides in offering the Dentist Health and Wellbeing program. They are working with each state to advocate for wellness programs at the state level and to reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues. Resources are available at [ADA.org/wellness](https://www.ada.org/wellness),

including the Mayo Clinic's Wellbeing Index, allowing providers to take a confidential self-assessment.

The Oregon Dental Association is leading the way with resources for our dentists. Our **Wellness Ambassadors** are available to talk confidentially with dentists and dental students needing help. Wellness Ambassadors are dentists with lived experiences in a variety of mental health issues, substance or alcohol use disorders, financial and business concerns, and many other areas of concern. The **Oregon Wellness Program** is also available for all licensed dentists

and hygienists. OWP allows three free and confidential mental health sessions with therapists who are experienced in assisting healthcare providers. If you are struggling or know someone who may need help, you can find confidential information at [oregondental.com/wellness](https://www.oregondental.com/wellness).

While the dental profession is increasingly demanding, embracing all seven dimensions of wellness allows practitioners to maintain resilience and deliver the best care. By prioritizing comprehensive self-care, dentists can thrive both personally and professionally. 🌟

To Learn More About Available Resources, Please Visit

<https://www.ada.org/resources/practice/wellness>

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5 Ways Solid Systems *WILL* Improve the Health of Your Practice!

By Janette Douglas

THERE IS A COMMONALITY WITH EVERY DENTAL PRACTICE

I have worked with over the years. Efficiency and productivity are critical to delivering high-quality patient care. Having well-structured systems in place not only streamlines daily operations but also enhances team cohesion, reduces stress, and creates an environment that consistently meets or even exceeds patient expectations. Assessing and evaluating the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities within a practice allows for continuous improvement and ensures long-term success and patient satisfaction. Let's look at five ways in which systems will create a thriving practice.

1. Increased Efficiency Through Clear Systems

When a dental practice uses well-established systems, each team member knows their responsibilities, which tasks they need to complete, and the proper workflow for each situation. These systems could include standardized procedures for patient intake, appointment scheduling, billing, and clinical processes. With clear protocols in place:

- Time is saved as there's no confusion about who does what.
- Employees spend less time correcting mistakes.
- Patient care becomes seamless, with fewer delays or miscommunications.

This increased efficiency translates into smoother day-to-day operations and a more pleasant experience for both patients and staff. For example, a practice with a clear scheduling

system ensures that patients are seen promptly, reducing waiting times and creating a better overall patient experience.

2. Boosting Team Cohesion and Morale

Strong systems foster collaboration and unity within a team. With defined processes, every team member understands their role within the larger context of patient care, which promotes accountability and teamwork. This clarity reduces frustration, as tasks are less likely to fall through the cracks, and expectations are transparent.

Teams that work within organized systems are also more adaptable. Should unforeseen challenges arise, such as a sudden increase in patient volume or staff shortages, the team can rally together, confident that their established processes can help them meet demands efficiently.

3. Reducing Stress and Burnout

Dental professionals are at an all-time high for facing elevated levels of stress and burnout due to the demanding nature of their work. Without proper systems, this stress is magnified by confusion, inefficiencies, and extra work caused by repeated errors or disorganization. Organized systems reduce stress by providing structure.

For example, automating routine tasks such as appointment reminders or patient follow-ups does away with time-consuming manual work. When employees aren't bogged down by administrative burdens, they can focus on their core

responsibilities, leading to improved job satisfaction and reduced burnout. Streamlined systems help reduce patient complaints, which can be a significant source of stress for dental professionals.

4. Meeting and Exceeding Patient Expectations

Patients expect prompt, professional, and compassionate care. When systems are poorly organized, patient experience suffers. Delays, miscommunications, or administrative errors can result in dissatisfaction and loss of trust. With solid systems in place, patients are more likely to receive consistent, high-quality care, which enhances their experience and fosters loyalty to the practice.

For example, implementing a patient portal system that allows for easy appointment scheduling, access to records, and direct communication with the dental team improves patient engagement and satisfaction. Efficient systems ensure that patient concerns are addressed quickly, their time is respected, and their care is personalized. They feel you care, which leads to patient loyalty!

5. Assessing Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities

To maintain and improve these systems, dental practices must regularly assess their strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. A practice might excel in patient care but struggle with administrative tasks, such as insurance and billing. By identifying such weaknesses, steps can be taken to improve those

Continued on page 20

Join the ODA's Legislative Action Team!

With the 2025 legislative session rapidly approaching, the ODA is building its team of dental advocates and looking for members interested in getting involved in the legislative process!

The ODA has assembled an experienced, professional lobby team that represents the interests and needs of the dental industry in Salem and Washington D.C., but there is no substitute for the voices of those working with patients and running dental offices every day and who can advocate for patients' rights. Legislators want to hear from those with firsthand experience in dentistry, which is why we need YOU to sign up and get involved with our Legislative Action Team!

What does it mean to join the ODA Legislative Action Team?

Signing up does not mean we're going to ask you to give up your day job and spend every day lobbying for dentistry in Salem. It simply means you'll be added to our list of advocates that we can call upon when we need dentists to speak on behalf of the industry.

What might I be asked to do as a member of the ODA Legislative Action Team?

Advocacy can take many forms, depending on your comfort level, experience and expertise. As a member of the ODA Legislative Action Team, you may be invited to:

- Write a letter to your legislators
- Call your legislator's office to urge them to vote on a bill
- Write an op-ed for a local publication
- Attend a meeting with a legislator
- Attend Dental Day at the Capitol in Salem
- Testify in a legislative committee
- Attend a fundraiser on behalf of ODA's political action committee: DOPAC
- Fly to Washington, D.C. with dental advocates from across the country to advocate for dental priorities with your members of Congress

How do I sign up?

Go to oregondental.org/government-affairs/advocacy/legislative-action-team and let us know which activities you are interested in. You can also email ODA's Director of Government and Regulatory Affairs Brett Hamilton at bhamilton@oregondental.org and express your interest directly.



Dr. Zeller – 2024 House of Delegates President Speech

HELLO EVERYONE. Thank you, Scott, for the introduction. I just want to start by thanking everyone for not only joining us today but lasting through the entire day. We really appreciate you all being here.

A few years ago, after a very, very long meeting at the ADA House of Delegates, I sat by the hotel pool watching my equally exhausted colleagues float down a lazy river. All of a sudden, Dr. Miller, the ODA president at the time, approached me and asked if I would be running for president the following year. My first thought was, how dare he put this on me! But over the next few days, I let the idea settle and I reflected on what I believed makes a good leader.

I began making a mental list, starting with **experience**: I have been attending Board of Trustee meetings since 2017.

Then, I thought about **temperament**: When I am engaged in a purpose, I am the kind of person who doesn't dip her toe into things – I dive in fully. I never want to have wasted a single moment when I might have helped make things better in this world.

And finally, I thought about how a good leader sees the **big picture**. Over the past seven years, I believe I have come to truly understand the Oregon Dental Association, while not losing sight of the reasons I got involved in the first place.

So, I ran out of excuses for Dr. Miller and surrendered to my fate, happily. I do believe it is important to take leadership positions at the right time. And this year, I have to admit, is the right time for me.

Because I'm on the admissions committee for OHSU, I know how many of you wanted to become a dentist after being transformed by the power of braces – and bringing smiles to patient's faces. My interest in dentistry came from seeing the way my father TRULY cared for his patients. I saw this while we were on mission trips in the Dominican Republic and back home in Topeka, Kansas. I admired the way he ran a fair business and always put the patient first. I watched my father take care of everyone who walked into his office irrespective of their situation or financial status. Because of that, I saw respect for him grow throughout the entire community. Once I started seeing patients in dental school, I tried to practice what he had taught me. I found myself drawn to working with vulnerable populations and phobic patients, finding ways to establish a genuine relationship of trust. I discovered that one of the best things about dentistry is what an HONOR it is for patients to trust us to help improve their oral health. It is a responsibility I believe we should always remember and never take for granted.

Shortly after graduating dental school, before getting involved in any organized dentistry, I attended a conference on the future of our profession. I discovered that there were many aspects of the conference that incited fear and concern in the minds of the attendees. I, on the other hand, found it wildly exciting. Many walked away from the conference talking about how we need to stop the inevitable changes coming our way,

but I started imagining ways that these changes could actually lead to better outcomes for our patients. I looked around at my fellow new dentists and heard a lot of them voice concerns about burnout, and dentistry not being what they thought it was going to be. It was clear to me that dentistry was in a bit of an identity crisis. After a presentation, I approached one of the speakers. I shared with him that, while there are so many things I love about dentistry, I couldn't help but feel that there are so many obstacles to providing and receiving optimal care, for both dentists and patients. It was honestly keeping me up at night. His response changed my life. He said, at the end of the day the American Dental Association is the voice of dentistry not only in the United States, but worldwide. His perspective was that, while there are many ways to influence the future and assist in positive change, one of the most effective ways to do that is from within the industry.

Two weeks later this new mentor put action to his words by connecting me with a man by the name of Conor McNulty at the Oregon Dental Association. Over the next several years, Conor came to be my ultimate role model for professionalism. To this day I think of him and how he might respond to challenges that pop up in our organization. One thing I learned from Conor was the power of listening. Early on I loved to talk, like any green newcomer with a hunger for change. But today it's the listening that I crave. As ODA President, I will first be listening, to best serve our members and their patients.

Since I embarked on my journey to being a good listener first, there are a few things I've learned. As the dental landscape continues to grow and change, state dental associations are tasked with being everything to everyone. This is, of course, an impossibility. And we have to be real: What people want from a membership organization has changed. Since one of the only certainties about life is change, we cannot simply do what we've always done—that will be our demise. We must focus, we must prioritize, and we must strategize. This year, the ODA will thoughtfully re-align and evaluate who we are and who we want to be. We must understand the desires of all dentists, and be an organization worth believing in. We can no longer thrive by only meeting the needs of a particular sector of dentists. We must also further develop our relationships and partnerships with other oral health stakeholders in the state. We are stronger together.

I am incredibly proud and excited to lead this group. Compared to other state dental associations, ODA's board of trustees, and our individual leaders, are very diverse. Moving forward, diversity will continue to be important at a state and national level, to ensure that we are able to thrive and remain relevant. Over the next year, we must consistently maintain and nurture diversity of thought. A group that agrees on everything is not the group we need. It is the contrarians on both sides who force us to do the good and right work. All voices are welcome, so please never hesitate to speak up. As you know, I love to listen.

We will be making some big changes this year. I promise I'm not going to let an entire year pass, look back, and wonder what just happened. As an organization we will focus on becoming very clear on who we are and what we stand for. When you clearly define who you are, all of a sudden, decisions become a lot easier to make. We will not be slowly crawling



forward at a snail's pace. We will be moving swiftly and with urgency. We will amplify what's working, and we will change what's not.

As we all know, change does not always equal improvement. But, if change is implemented correctly, it provides us a measurement of success, which identifies what adjustments may need to be made as we go forward. In an ever-changing climate, we should not be afraid of change! We should be afraid of stasis and slowly declining results. It's time we crave big wins. And we only get big wins with big change.

As I move into this new position, I have the absolute privilege to follow Dr. Mark Mutschler. If you know Mark well, you know what an excellent human he is. Watching Mark over the past year has provided me with great

mentorship in what it means to be the president of ODA. It's not about having the biggest voice in the room; it's not about making all the decisions. He has taught me how to ask the right questions to best determine what the organization wants and needs. Mark is the opposite of ego. He has worked hard to create space for other voices, and he has provided support above and beyond. Along with benefitting from his exceptional leadership, I have really enjoyed getting to know him and Fariba over the last year.

Along with Dr. Mutschler I would like to thank our Board of Trustees. We have such an exceptional board right now, and I can't wait to continue working with them in this new capacity. A lot of that work will happen right alongside Dr. Amberena Fairlee. Dr. Fairlee is our new President-elect,

and her energy is infectious! From the moment she was considering running for this role, she made it clear that her number one priority is membership. So get ready to see Dr. Fairlee more and more. We at ODA will benefit from her valuable contributions. We are very lucky to have her.

I want to thank Barry and the rest of the ODA staff. This team is really special. They have so much to offer, and, I believe, so much more to give our community. I look forward to listening to these experts and helping ODA staff grow and thrive in all the very best ways.

Finally, I want to thank my family. Specifically, my husband Jason and my parents. I've been married for a little over two years, and admittedly, choosing to do a volunteer job that occupies an enormous amount of time is not necessarily the best marriage builder. But lucky for me, Jason is incredibly supportive, and words cannot express how much I

admire and love him. My parents have always been such a wonderful source of wise and enthusiastic support for me. Both my mother and father were with me on my initial mission trips where I learned about dentistry and the impact it can have. Not only have they always been rooting for me, but they truly are my best friends.

I feel so grateful for the support I know I will have over the coming year, and I am looking forward to the work we are going to do.

There are two things that are clear. First, we are at an important time in dentistry. How we align ourselves moving forward will dictate how we thrive in the future. Second, to be an association that continues to be of crucial importance to our profession, it is important that we strategically position ourselves in ways that not only provide value, but that focus on doing **real work** that aligns with our mission. I'm excited. Let's have a good year.

Thank you. 🌟

5 WAYS SOLID...

Continued from page 16

areas, whether through additional training, new software, or revised procedures.

You may be a practice owner, an associate, belong to a DSO or corporate dental. Whatever the work environment is, all dentists want a streamlined, efficient practice, where they, the team, and the patients are happy to be there. Having organized systems in place is crucial to making that happen. It is the number one step to ensure the dental practice can meet and exceed doctor, team, and patient expectations. Take steps now toward a healthy, long-term, successful practice in 2025! 🌟



Janette Douglas is owner of JD Dental Consulting. Jan's goal

with every client is to create a smooth-running, efficient practice which leads to "Happy doctor, Happy staff, Happy patients."

She understands the desperate need for training and education for dental administrative staff. Her 30-year career in dental practice management led to her passion to pass along her knowledge and expertise to implement systems that increase revenue and reduce stress.

As president of Oregon Dental Executives Association (ODEA), Jan helped many practice managers by providing cutting-edge resources and solutions to the unique challenges and changes taking place in today's dental practice management sector.

Jan is a member of The Speaking Consulting Network, a member of AADOM Speaker/Consultant Alliance, and a lifetime member of the American Association of Dental Office Managers (AADOM).

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The Importance of Local Anesthesia Continuing Education

ODC SPEAKER

By Enrique Varela, DDS

PERHAPS ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ASPECTS of a successful dental practice is the clinician's ability to manage pain. So much of the patient experience, and by extension, our financial success, depends on our ability to consistently achieve profound anesthesia. Yet so many of us, myself included, fall victim to the demands of a tight schedule and grueling production goals so that we forget to maintain the effectiveness of our injection technique. Even the best of us fall short, which is why continuing education courses on local anesthetic technique are such a vital yet underutilized part of our professional development.

As clinicians, we perform a lot of injections. In fact, one study estimates that the average dentist will administer over 1,500 cartridges of local anesthetic within a single year!^{1,2} You would think that all this practice would

be enough to keep our technique in tip-top shape. But the reality is that practicing the mechanical movements has only ever been *part* of the process. Take, for example, the training one receives in dental and dental hygiene school. Traditional local anesthesiology instruction methods combine mechanical practice with a thorough understanding of anatomy, patient factors, drug pharmacology, and complication management, among many other things.

When combined, these elements work together to produce a more complete base of knowledge from which the clinician can draw when performing injections and managing complications and failures.

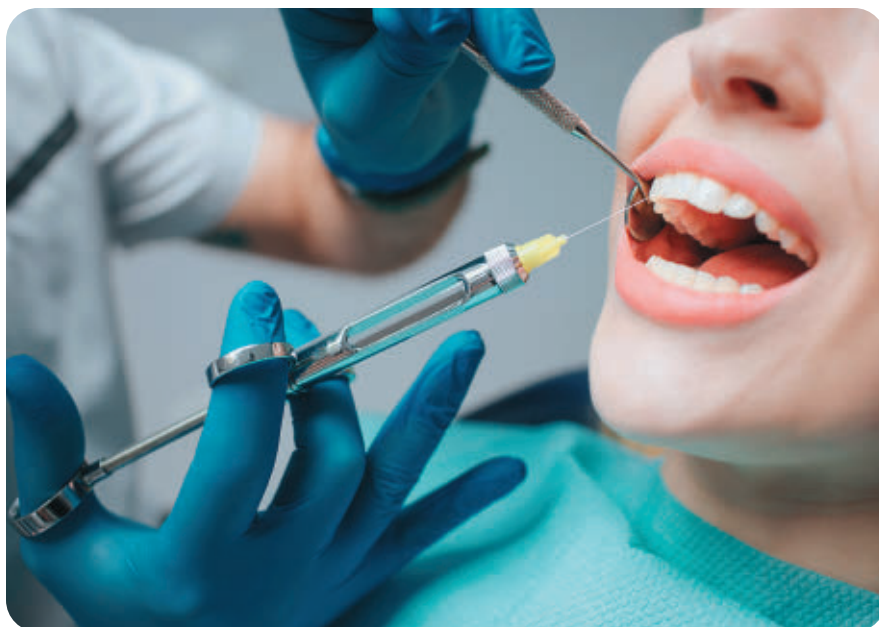
Now, I know it's unpopular to admit to failures in dentistry. We want people to see the best we have to offer. But failure can be an excellent teacher. Some clinicians may go days, months,

or even years suffering through a lack of confidence because they are afraid to admit to failures in their injection technique. But for those of us who are feeling this way, allow me to provide you with some perspective. Due to the imperfect and unpredictable nature of human anatomy, biology, physiology, and biochemistry, local anesthesia will never be perfectly effective or predictable on every patient every time. It is not possible. So cut yourself some slack! It's OK to admit that your technique could use some improvement. Honest reflection can help us be open to learning the things we need to improve.

I've spent a fair amount of time around hospitals, operating rooms, and in collaboration with medical colleagues. One thing I've learned from these experiences is that patient care can sometimes yield unexpected results, even when you're going by the book! Which is why adopting a commitment to continuing education is such an essential part of successfully meeting challenges as they arise.

One of my favorite things to do when working on weekend chores at home is listening to military veteran podcasts. A common thread woven through each veteran's experience is the concept of situational awareness. In short, situational awareness encourages the user to assess and understand their environment to such a degree that they are able to make critical decisions when untoward or unexpected situations arise, thereby decreasing the risk of harm to the unit.

Many industries have adopted this concept to help manage risk and



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increase positive outcomes among clients. And what the concept of situational awareness challenges us to do in dentistry is to be active and intentional participants in the patient care process, instead of relying on repetition and routine to get the job done. It gives us the ability to be present in the moment of treatment, and to adjust our technique as needed. This can be difficult for a clinician to do because of the demands upon our time and attention. This highlights the importance of participating in local anesthesia continuing education. Doing so gives us the opportunity to periodically re-familiarize ourselves with the principles that make our technique effective.

So, as we continue moving forward in our careers, let us take encouragement from the fact that things can always get better in our practices, in our technique, and with our patients. We need only avail ourselves of the wonderful opportunity for improvement through continuing education. ●

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Enrique Varela, DDS, is an associate professor at the University of Utah School of Dentistry,

where he serves as the section head over Geriatric and Adult Special Care Dentistry and as course director for Dental Local Anesthesiology. He also serves as the director for the Geriatric, Hospital, and Special Needs Pathway Program. He graduated from the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Dentistry and practiced in Missouri and Kansas before completing a general practice residency at the University of Utah Hospital in 2016.

Dr. Varela will be speaking at the Oregon Dental Conference on Thursday, April 3.

Mentorship Matters

ODC SPEAKER

By ArNelle Wright, DMD

IN A RECENT PUBLICATION, the Health Policy Institute of the American Dental Association reported that “the number of women in dentistry is increasing, with women comprising 54.5% of graduates in 2023 compared with 47.2% in 2013.” Keeping these statistics in mind, as the dental profession evolves, we as leaders from various backgrounds must evolve intentionally to meet the needs of the next generation, ensuring that the profession doesn’t stagnate.

It is essential that we, as experienced professionals and leaders, keep pace with emerging technologies, modern practices, and the evolving landscape of patient care. The last thing we want is for the wisdom we offer to the next generation to be out of touch with the needs of a rapidly advancing profession. To do this, we need to actively learn and adapt, ensuring

we’re not passing on outdated practices but instead preparing newer dentists for success in a digital, interconnected world.

Friends, mentorship is the way. The future of dentistry depends on our ability to cultivate leaders who are not only exceptional clinicians but also innovators and visionaries. It’s crucial that we establish mentorship programs that guide new dentists—particularly women—through the early challenges of their careers. These programs should offer support in navigating the transition from dental school to practice ownership or other leadership roles within the field.

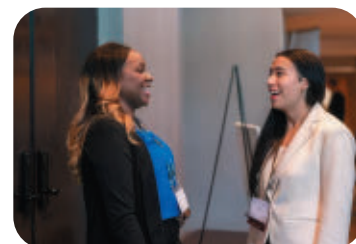
Traditional pathways are evolving, and the next generation of dentists must be prepared to take the reins in ways that allow them to leave a lasting impact. Leadership programs that focus on both clinical expertise and the so-called “soft” skills needed

to manage teams both in and out of practice, and engage in public speaking or thought leadership are vital. We must be intentional about passing down the knowledge and wisdom from generations before us, while also remaining open to new ideas and ways of thinking.

One of the most critical tools for reaching and teaching this new generation of dentists is social media. For too long, some in the profession have dismissed platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter (now X), and TikTok as distractions. However, these spaces are powerful tools for education, community building, and professional growth. We must understand and value these platforms as essential channels for delivering our messages, mentoring young dentists, and sharing our knowledge on a broader scale. Social media is where many of our future leaders



ArNelle Wright



ARNELLE WRIGHT, DMD

come, seeking inspiration, guidance, and mentorship...and as a result, it's where we need to meet them.

Additionally, the future of dentistry is expanding far beyond the traditional clinical model. Women in dentistry are no longer confined to a singular path of patient care in a practice. Many are embracing entrepreneurship, launching innovative businesses, creating content, and establishing thought leadership positions within the profession. By nurturing mentorship programs that emphasize entrepreneurship and financial literacy, for example, we can empower them to think beyond their dental chairs, while applying their thought leadership within their practice.

Beyond clinical practice, the next generation of women dentists is increasingly interested in entrepreneurship and creating multiple streams of income. The traditional model of working exclusively in

a clinical setting is no longer the only pathway to success. More and more women in dentistry are looking to leverage their skills in bigger ways—whether that's through starting their own practices, creating educational platforms, or investing in businesses outside of healthcare. This entrepreneurial spirit is also closely tied to the idea of building generational wealth. Financial literacy programs are essential to ensure that women dentists are not only successful in their careers but also in their lives, and as a way to create generational wealth, equipping us all with tools to invest in new ventures, create multiple streams of income, and contribute to the profession on a larger scale, and in more dynamic ways.

The dental profession has been known to rely heavily on tradition, but to meet the needs of the next generation, we cannot afford to become archaic in our approach.

The rapid pace of technological advancement means that dentists must continuously adapt to new tools and techniques. This not only applies to clinical practice, where digital dentistry is changing the way we diagnose and treat patients, but also to how we communicate and build our professional brands. Though we are witnessing a seismic shift in the demographics of dentistry, particularly with more women stepping into the profession, it's important to remember that there is room for everyone in this evolving landscape. Women dentists are taking the lead, but the profession thrives on diversity—in gender, background, and skillset. By focusing on mentorship, leadership development, and financial empowerment, we can ensure that the next generation of dentists have the tools necessary to thrive both clinically and entrepreneurially. ●

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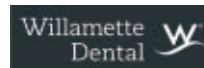
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What the New Dentists Are Up To

NEW DENTIST
CORNER

By Alayna Schoblaske, DMD

NOW THAT I AM HALFWAY THROUGH MY FOUR-YEAR TERM

with the New Dentist Committee, I finally feel like I have a grasp on the workings of the committee, and I am always learning more about the workings of the ADA.

As a refresher, the NDC is comprised of 17 new dentists (10 years or less from dental school graduation), one from each of the ADA's geographic districts. I represent District 11, which is Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Idaho, and Montana. The 2024-25 NDC has eight women, four dentists that work in public health settings, three that are faculty at dental schools or residencies, three that are specialists, and four that are bilingual (at least that I know of). Many more are in solo and group private practice settings. The NDC is an increasingly diverse group whose main purpose is to advise the American Dental Association Board of Trustees on matters pertaining to new dentists (read: pretty much everything), and to develop resources to recruit and support new dentists and dental student members. We meet twice each year in person, and three more times on Zoom. Additionally, every NDC member serves as a liaison to an ADA council that has its own meeting

schedule. This year, I am the liaison to the Council on Advocacy for Access and Prevention.

As the ADA sees membership declining and recognizes the importance of attracting and retaining new dentist members, the voice of the NDC has become more important than ever. This importance was recognized in the spring of 2024, when the NDC was assigned two new ADA staff leaders who report more directly to influential leaders within the ADA. These staff members – Dayna Bina and Ivy Woods – take the vision and direction of the NDC and make it a reality. They are amazing!

So what have we been talking about lately? I want to focus on three wins from 2024 and two goals for the year ahead.

Win 1: In April of 2024, ADPAC and the ADA were able to sponsor the hotel rooms for ASDA chapters that wanted to attend Lobby Day in Washington, D.C. This meant that over 700 dental students were able to attend, strengthening our voice on Capitol Hill. The NDC recommended this change, and we were so thrilled to see so many dental students advocating for our profession early in their careers.

Win 2: The ADA's social media presence has exploded over the past year after the NDC recommended an overhaul of our social media communications strategy. In 2024, the ADA's social media audience grew by 20% (148,000 followers), and followers were more engaged with the content. Link clicks increased by 221%, and video views increased by a whopping 3,652%! The ADA social media team members were also recognized with national awards from

DotCOMM and Ragan PR. Social media plays a key role in attracting and educating members and the public, so this growth is critical to the success of our organization.

Win 3: The NDC continues to coordinate the ADA Success program, where ADA member speakers visit dental schools to talk about organized dentistry. In the 2023-24 school year, 101 programs were delivered. We hope to see continued growth in the year ahead!

Goal 1: The ADA and NDC are launching a brand new leadership conference that will be the first of its kind. While the ADA may not be the premier source of clinical CE for our members, we believe that we can deliver world class leadership training that supports all members – no matter their practice setting, specialty, or interests. The conference is called Elevate and will be in Washington, D.C., in late March. You can learn more at ada.org/elevate.

Goal 2: One of the NDC's perennial goals is to recommend tangible benefits that are exciting and relevant to new dentists. We are really excited about the launch of the members-only ADA credit union in 2025, and will continue to make recommendations to maximize its appeal. We are also working on a couple of product discounts that are still top secret, but hopefully I can share more as 2025 progresses!

As always, if you have questions about the New Dentist Committee or the work that ADA is doing for new dentists and dental students, please reach out to me via email at aschoblaske@gmail.com or on Instagram at [@alaynathedentist](https://www.instagram.com/alaynathedentist). 🌐



DAYNA BINA

The members of the NDC at their October 2024 meeting.

September Fall Kickoff Tailgate Event

COMPONENT HIGHLIGHT

By Lora Matsen, Executive Director Multnomah Dental Society

WHAT A FANTASTIC WAY TO KICK OFF THE SEASON! Our third annual tailgate event was an enormous success. Over 100 people came together for food, drinks, engagement, and fun on a warm September evening in the ODA building parking lot.

It was great to see so many new faces along with the familiar and friendly faces that continue to support our organization. We had members from multiple components, non-members, residents, dental students, and vendors who all gathered for an evening of fun.

The participating components with members attending from each, included Multnomah Dental Society,

Clackamas County Dental Society, Washington County Dental Society, and Marion Polk Dental Society. The awesome ODA staff was on hand to provide membership information and answer questions.

Gift baskets and gift cards were raffled off throughout the evening as attendees moved around the parking lot and caught up with each other while eating food from Ricky's Tacos and The Chop Spot.

There was ample tap beer, cider, and specialty cocktails provided by the Social Goods Tap Trailer, fresh mini doughnuts generously being served up by Mythical Doughnuts and ice cream from Magical Scoop Shop. Nobody went hungry or thirsty.

We could not continue to provide these gatherings without the generous support of our sponsors. They are so important to our association and cannot be thanked enough for their unwavering support. A big thank you to **Artisan Dental Lab, Astra Practice Partners, BNK Construction, Card Care, Columbia Bank, Fluence, Heritage Bank, TDIC, and WEO Media.**

Our goal is always to make sure our members feel welcome, have an opportunity to engage, and hopefully get a few new members to join!

We thoroughly enjoyed seeing everyone having a wonderful time! 🍷



ADA House of Delegates – Action in the Big Easy

IN OCTOBER, EIGHT ODA MEMBERS TRAVELED to New Orleans to take part in the American Dental Association House of Delegates. The American Dental Association is a membership-driven organization that ultimately turns to its members to decide how it should operate, what it should spend its money (including your dues) on, and what positions it takes when lobbying at the national, state, and local levels. Because we do not have all-member elections, the annual House of Delegates is a chance for members from each state to gather annually and make decisions on behalf of all members. There are a total of 483 representatives. These representatives are called delegates and are all members of the American Dental Association. This

year, Oregon sent seven delegates and one alternate delegate: Dr. Mark Mutschler, Dr. Caroline Zeller, Dr. Amberena Fairlee, Dr. Mike Naughton, Dr. Scott Hansen, Dr. Eddie Ramirez, Dr. Julie Spaniel, and Dr. Alayna Schoblaske (alternate). Some of the delegates shared their reflections on the experience.

***You will see a few references to the 11th district. The ADA is split into 17 geographic districts, and Oregon is part of District 11 with Alaska, Idaho, Montana, and Washington. We are well known for our Pacific Northwest hospitality and welcome all of our members with plenty of love!

**Amberena Fairlee,
ODA President-elect**

This was my first time attending the ADA's House of Delegates, and it was

such a great experience. I felt inspired getting to hear Linda Edgar speak about her experience as outgoing ADA president; and I felt excitement listening to our new ADA president, Brett Kessler, describe his vision for a united organization. It was also so encouraging to meet other young leaders from around the country. The ADA is expanding in representation and is certainly in good hands moving forward.

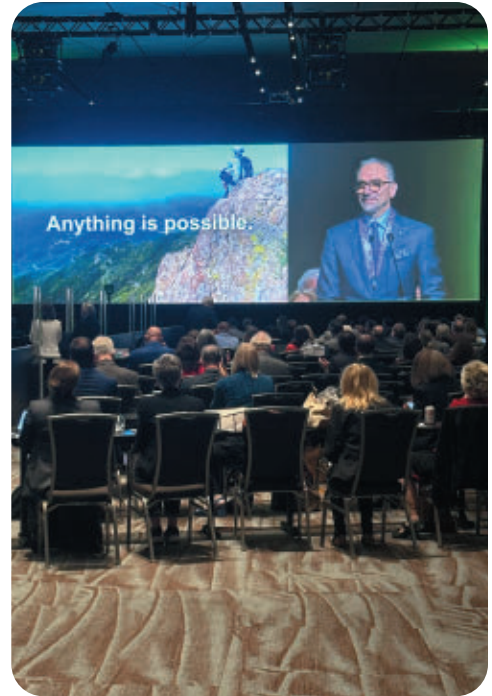
**Scott Hansen,
ODA Speaker of the House**

The 2024 ADA House of Delegates in New Orleans was surprisingly uneventful. There were not a whole lot of consequential resolutions this year, although many got a lot of debate and some controversy. It was great to see someone from



JULIE SPANIEL





ALAYNA SCHOBBLASKE

our District, District 11, on each of the reference committees so they helped us understand much of what went on in each of the four reference committees. I would say that the most important thing we did this year was elect a treasurer. That is not a one and done position like the president is, so that person really gets to be around long enough to understand the finances of the ADA and then relate that back to us. I thought we chose the best candidate (Dr. Cody Graves).

As always, our delegation is one of the youngest, brightest, and best in the nation. We have some fabulous delegates representing us at the HOD, so we should be proud.

**Alayna Schoblaske,
ODA Editor**

New Orleans was my favorite House of Delegates location so far! It was so great to get to explore the local sights (and tastes!) after a few long days of influencing the future of our dental profession. I got to serve as the vice chair of our District 11 delegation this year and was really proud of the way

that we strategically considered all of the resolutions and welcomed all 11 candidates for elected office (five for president-elect, four for treasurer, and two for second vice president) to our meetings to get to know them before voting. I was excited to see Dr. Richard Rosato from New Hampshire chosen as president-elect, Dr. Tamara Berg from Oklahoma chosen as second vice president, and Dr. Cody Graves from Texas chosen as treasurer.

I also served on the reference committee for resolutions about dental education and related matters. We worked for over six hours to incorporate member feedback and make the resolutions better. It was hard work, but I have a new appreciation for the governance structure of the House of Delegates!

One of my favorite moments was when our new president, Dr. Brett Kessler, specifically mentioned the work of federally qualified health centers in his speech to the House of Delegates. As a dentist that works in an FQHC, it meant so much to have

our innovative approach to integrated health care recognized!

**Julie Spaniel,
ODA Delegate at Large**

One of my highlight moments was participating in Reference Committee A. It was fascinating to learn about the inner workings of editing resolutions. The ADA staff were very knowledgeable and so helpful for the broader picture when discussing details. It was hard work and took many hours behind closed doors, but I was honored to be asked to serve in this capacity. I will definitely volunteer for this position again!

One of the most meaningful moments was attending an AA meeting with Dr. Kessler in New Orleans to celebrate our new president's 26th sober anniversary. Dr. Kessler and I have been friends in recovery for many years, and he stands as a powerful example of hope for anyone facing mental health or substance use challenges. I was thrilled to hear that he has prioritized the mental health of our dentists as a key focus for the year. ●

Embracing Wellness: Inside the Lives of Dental Students at OHSU

OHSU

By Heather Langdon, ODA Membership Coordinator & Wellness Liaison

THE ASDA WELLNESS COMMITTEE AT OHSU DENTAL

School has been instrumental in organizing events like the annual Wellness Picnic in the fall. This affair brings students together in a relaxed outdoor setting amid the backdrop of Oregon's natural beauty. Students engage in activities designed to promote physical fitness, social interaction, and emotional relaxation. It's not just about good food and games; it's about fostering a sense of community and belonging—a crucial factor in combating the stress and pressures often associated with dental school.

Beyond picnics, the Wellness Lunch and Learn sessions offer students valuable insights into various dimensions of wellness. In the spring the committee presented the eight dimensions of wellness, a comprehensive framework that

includes physical, emotional, social, intellectual, occupational, spiritual, environmental, and financial aspects of well-being. Students shared ways they increase personal wellbeing including spending more time with family, volunteering in the community, creating budget spreadsheets, and attending study clubs. These essential skills empower students to navigate both their academic journey and personal lives with confidence and resilience.

Why Wellness Matters to Dental Students

The rigors of dental education can be daunting—a demanding curriculum, long hours in clinics, and the pressure to excel academically and clinically. In such an environment, prioritizing wellness isn't just beneficial; it's essential for success. Research has shown that students who actively engage in wellness

practices experience reduced burnout, improved academic performance, and greater job satisfaction upon entering the workforce.

Looking Ahead

As the ASDA Wellness Committee continues to expand its reach and impact at OHSU Dental School, the future looks promising. Plans are under way to introduce new initiatives that cater to the evolving needs of students, ensuring that wellness remains a cornerstone of the educational experience.

In a profession where caring for others is paramount, it's refreshing to see OHSU dental students embrace the importance of self-care and wellness. By prioritizing their own wellbeing, they not only enhance their personal lives but also enrich their capacity to serve their future patients with empathy, resilience, and compassion. 🌱



ODA STAFF

Going for Gold

Karl Woodmansey was the only American dentist at the Paris Paralympic Games

OHSU

By Rhonda Morin, APR

KARL WOODMANSEY, DDS, MA, nurtures an adventurous spirit. An assistant professor in the OHSU School of Dentistry, Woodmansey has applied to be an astronaut, driver of the Oscar Meyer Weinermobile, and a decorator of the national Christmas tree at the White House.

He was surprised to discover that his experience this summer as the only American to serve as a dentist during the Paris Paralympic Games topped his favorite's list.

"The Paralympics wasn't even on my radar. In October 2023, I was notified that I was selected," he said, after having applied to volunteer for the Olympics that occurred in July. Woodmansey is a faculty member in the School of Dentistry Endodontology Division.

The Paris 2024 Paralympic Games (<https://www.paralympic.org/paris-2024/about-us>) hosted more than 4,400 athletes from across the globe who competed in 22 different sports. They were cared for by about 250 health care professionals combined during the summer events that also included the Olympics, according to Fortune Media (<https://fortune.com/>

[well/article/team-usa-medical-staff-figs-scrubs-uniforms-paris-2024-olympics-paralympics/](https://www.fortune.com/well/article/team-usa-medical-staff-figs-scrubs-uniforms-paris-2024-olympics-paralympics/)).

The three-story building he worked in had five dental treatment rooms stocked with the latest equipment in oral health care from Oral B and other sponsors. The Polyclinic clinic where the dental team worked was housed in the Paralympic Athletes Village. The games ran from Aug. 28 to Sept. 8.

In comparison, Team USA had about 60 of its own medical professionals who traveled with its various Paralympic teams, including physicians, orthopedists, physical therapists, athletic trainers, and sports psychologists. They were in a separate building.

"But even Team USA had no dentists!" said Woodmansey, emphasizing the importance of the French dental facility for the athletes and coaches.

Most of the countries that participated in the games did not have medical professionals who attended. The Polyclinic clinic served as a hub for athletes to receive oral health care, X-rays, MRIs, and other procedures.

Reprinted with permission from OHSU Now, Oct. 10, 2024 <https://dy.si/32NRS>

Lost in Translation

Woodmansey only speaks English. All but two of his patients spoke languages other than English as he treated them. Procedures took twice as long as they normally would because of the time spent translating as well as having to use unfamiliar European computer equipment that slowed keying in patient information.

He and his patients devised creative ways to communicate. For example, a patient from Morocco spoke Arabic and had someone translate her conversation to French over her cell phone so that the dental assistant could translate the conversation to English for Woodmansey.

"The translation was tedious, but everyone was appreciative of the care. It makes me appreciate the interpretation services that we have at OHSU," he said.

The OHSU Interpreting Service (<https://o2.ohsu.edu/language-services/interpreting-services>) limits misunderstandings and



Members of the French Polyclinic dental team surround Karl Woodmansey, DDS, MA, second from left.



Karl Woodmansey, DDS, MA, in front of the Polyclinic building, where he treated dental patients during the Paris 2024 Paralympics.

KARL WOODMANSEY



Karl Woodmansey, DDS, MA, sitting in front of an endodontic microscope in the Polyclinic building within the Paralympics Athletes Village.



Paralympics Dental Clinic—Sponsored by Oral B

improves outcomes, among other essential benefits. The professionals are certified medical interpreters who adhere to a code of ethics.

There to Help

In the United States, Woodmansey can treat six to eight patients each day. At the Paris Paralympics, he performed 35 root canals over 10 days on athletes and coaches the week leading up to the start of the games.

“I was there to do whatever needed to be done and do what I could to help,” he said.

There were two shifts a day; 7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 9 p.m., seven days a week. He would work a shift and then have free time to explore the city’s sites like the Eiffel Tower and the Palace of Versailles.

While working his shift, he was constantly impressed by the quality of the clinics.

“I had microscopes and digital radiology. The dental clinic was part of a larger medical facility that included all aspects of medical care, including MRIs, said Woodmansey. “I had everything I needed.”

Adventurous Spirit

Woodmansey has had a 37-year career as a general dentist and endodontist. He taught at Texas A&M for seven years before joining OHSU School of Dentistry part time last winter. He lives in Texas and travels to Oregon to be on campus once a month and he teaches online courses.

New experiences keep him invigorated, so Woodmansey regularly throws his hat in the ring for a chance to try something different. That’s what he did in 2022 in anticipation of the 2024 Olympics. But the call he got was for the Paralympics instead.

Root Canals

The goal of the job is to provide a level of care for the athletes so they can continue to compete in their events. Though many of the patients he treated likely would have benefited from tooth extractions, he opted to perform root canals. This allowed the athletes to recover in time to compete in their sport or the coaches to continue their work without a long recovery time.

“Root canals enable us not to extract the tooth,” he said.

The experience in Paris was the highlight of Woodmansey’s year. It gave him a new appreciation for the work that goes into preparing for and hosting the Paralympics and Olympics.

Would he volunteer again to serve at future games?

“Absolutely!” he exclaimed. ●



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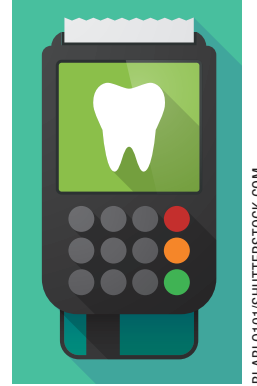
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Patient Balance Credits Considered Unclaimed Property, Rules Governed by State

By Melody Finnemore



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WHILE MOST DENTAL PRACTICES have, at some point, had to manage patient balances that are overdue, others also have encountered the opposite. What should they do when patients have a credit on their balance that has gone unclaimed?

Stephen Prisby, executive director of the Oregon Board of Dentistry, said the agency has no rules or policy on unclaimed property. If a patient has an unclaimed balance on their account, the licensee should contact the risk management department of their malpractice insurance. They also can submit a report to the Oregon State Treasury to see if it qualifies to be added to the unclaimed property/assets database, he advised.

Fluence, a Portland firm that assists dental practices, states the two most common types of unclaimed property for a dental practice are credit balances on patient accounts and uncashed patient refund checks. Patient credit balances typically occur when a patient pays an estimated portion at the time of service, their dental benefits plan reimburses a higher amount than expected, or the dental plan has made an overpayment.

Unclaimed property that has not been returned to its owner for three years must be reported and can be turned in to the Oregon Department of Lands in addition to the Oregon State Treasury. The deadline for this each year is November 1. In the months preceding the filing deadline, there is also a requirement to notify the owner of the funds if the amount held by the practice is over a certain dollar amount. This gives the owner an opportunity to claim the funds directly

from the practice prior to them being turned over to the state.

Each state has its own filing requirements, and the compliance offices are looking into this as an additional source of significant revenue. To get an idea of how big a revenue source this can be, the Oregon Department of Lands website states that the department receives about \$50 million in unclaimed property each year, while it only returns about \$15 million to its rightful owners, according to Fluence.

Dental Claim Support, a national revenue cycle management consulting firm, notes that patient overpayments should only be held on the account as a credit toward future procedures when the patient requests explicitly the credit be held. DCS recommends that a signed document should be held in the patient's record indicating the patient has granted permission to keep the money for future treatment expenses.

While states have individual requirements, there are some commonalities among states. These include the holding or dormancy period, values, annual reporting deadline, and due diligence requirement.

Once the management team has determined whether its practice has unclaimed property, they should generate and review an accounts receivable report on credit balances. An account analysis should be performed on each patient account with a credit balance to determine if there is a real credit balance and to whom the credit belongs, according to DCS.

For all accounts where there may have been more than one plan, and the provider is in-network with one or more of those plans, they should check to see that any PPO adjustments were applied correctly. It is not uncommon to find errors, and the result is money that does not belong to the practice, such as a PPO write-off applied twice.

When the conclusion is that an actual credit balance exists, the next question is whether it belongs to the patient or the insurance payer. If it belongs to the patient, practices should attempt to contact the patient in writing at their last known address. If the attempt is unsuccessful and the property remains with the practice, the unclaimed property should be reported and remitted to the state.

DCS points out that non-compliance penalties, such as the state assessing what it determines to be the estimated amount of unclaimed property held by the practice, can be much higher than the practice's actual unclaimed property amounts. Oregon can impose a civil penalty of up to \$50,000 for willful non-compliance, according to Fluence.

DCS reminded practice management teams to be proactive in refunding patient credit balances while maintaining contact with the patient; generate and review a credit balance accounts receivable report at least every 90 days; and maintain current contact information for each patient, including the proper mailing address.

To learn more, please visit <http://www.oregon.gov/dsl/UP/Pages/index.aspx>.

DENTAL CLASSIFIEDS

EQUIPMENT: SALE/SERVICE

2 suites of ADEC cabinets with sinks in Cherry finish. Suites consist of 12 O'clock units with assistant setup and monitor mounts, side cabinets with sinks and LED operating lights with mounts. Purchased in 2015, put into storage in 2017. Handled by Patterson Dental. Please contact Leah 541-510-2693.

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- ▶ Collecting Over \$1.0M In-Network with Delta Premier Only. (ORD174)
- ▶ Collecting Over \$800,000, 5 ops, 22 New Patients Per Month. (ORD180)
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