Nebraska Dental Assistants Association Seeks to Eliminate On-The-Job Trained Dental Assistants

The photo above is from the 2007 Stakeholders meeting regarding dental assistant duties. The August 15th Public Hearing regarding the NDAA’s Proposal to eliminate on-the-job trained dental assistants will look similar to this. See page 7 and 8 for a comparison of the NDAA Proposal and the Board of Dentistry.

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NMOM On-line Registration Now Open!

FLUORIDATION
Nature’s Cavity Fighter!
In reviewing the title I had given this article, a scene from the Wizard of Oz came to mind where Dorothy and her cohorts were traveling down the yellow brick road. They were chanting, "Lions and Tigers and Bears, Oh My!" For some reason, perhaps it was lack of sleep, I substituted Dorothy's chant with that of the title of this article: Assistants, Medicaid and Fluoride, Oh My! The roads the NDA is on regarding these legislative issues may not be made of yellow brick but they are most certainly paved with concerns that affect the dental profession and those you serve. To that end, you recently received two mailings: the dental assistant's survey and a letter of contact information regarding who to write to express your concerns with the Nebraska Dental Assistant Association (NDAA) Proposal.

A quick review of the history leading up to the current situation regarding the NDAA should be helpful:

May – October 2004 – NDA President John Ahlschwede forms a group from the NDA, NDHA and NDAA to look into expanded functions. The NDHA informs the NDA that they are seeking "the removal of supervision restrictions which would allow dental assistants the opportunity to provide traditional hygiene treatment services in all settings without the supervision of a dentist." The NDAA expresses the desire to create a "tiered" career ladder but includes an on-the-job trained dental assistant.

February 2005 – NDHA files a Notice of Intent with the State of Nebraska to allow hygienists to practice independently from dentists, beginning with the NDHA 407 Proposal and Legislative Bill 182 sponsored by four senators.

April 2005 – Board of Dentistry recommends the Nebraska Attorney General file a Petition filed against an Omaha dentist for delegating dental assisting duties not authorized by the Board. During this case, the Board discovered that the "list" of auxiliary duties were not enforceable because no such duties were identified in statutes or regulations. Dr. Ahlschwede's Expanded Function Committee and NDA Legislative Council continued their work, but also began formalizing "the list" of duties into regulations 172 NAC 53.

June 2005 – Public Hearing for the NDHA independent practice proposal in front of the 407 Technical Review Committee. The NDHA must satisfy all four criteria set forth in the regulations or else the Proposal fails. At the next 407 meeting, the Committee voted that the NDHA failed to satisfy all four criteria. The Board of Health and Dr. Joann Schaefer, Chief Medical Officer, later agreed with the Technical Review Committee's decision.

January 2006 – One statement made by the NDA at the 407 public hearing was challenged by the NDHA and found to be without support by Dr. Schaefer, causing her to change her June 2005 opinion on the 407 report. She sends a revised letter to the HHS Committee, supporting the NDHA Proposal. During the 2006 legislative session, the NDA and NDHA reach a compromise regarding three duties that hygienists can perform in public health settings without supervision: Oral prophylaxis to healthy children who do not require antibiotic premedication; pulp vitality testing; and preventive measures, including the application of fluorides, sealants, and other recognized topical agents for the prevention of oral disease.

February 2008 - The NDAA filed a Proposal to change their scope of practice, claiming that it will "increase jobs" and help the "access to care situation." In doing so, the NDAA (an association that purports to represent assistants) seeks to ELIMINATE all on the job trained assistants one year after their proposal takes effect. According to a 2005 Nebraska Workforce survey, 46% of the assistants have been trained on the job.

Where we stand now: Since 2005, the "list" of assistant duties has yet to be formalized into regulations. The process has slowed to a snail's pace as the NDAA convinced the Board of Health to "table" the proposed assistant regulations in favor of waiting for the NDAA 407 proposal, which, in the eyes of the NDAA was "addressing the same thing."

Last month I communicated to the Board of Health that the NDAA Proposal was NOT the same thing as the changes to the regulations and that the NDAA Proposal would ELIMINATE on-the-job trained assistants. The Board was informed that based on concerns from NDA members, such elimination of on-the-job assistants would cripple rural dental offices. Unfortunately the Board of Health chose not to believe the concerns voiced by the NDA. Hence, you received the Dental Assistant's Survey in an effort to illustrate to the Board of Health the negative consequences that this proposal would have if enacted.

The August 15th public hearing on the NDAA Proposal is only the first step in the process. The Board of Health will review the 407 Technical Committee's report and vote independently on the Proposal. From there, Dr. Joann Schaefer, Chief Medical Officer, will make her own review of the Proposal and write a report to the Nebraska Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee. This is why we mailed you contact information for individuals serving on the aforementioned Committee. They need to hear from YOU as to why the NDAA proposal is bad for oral health in Nebraska. This is the perfect time to connect with your senator as many of you will have something else to talk to your senator about: namely, community fluoridation. Thirty four Senators supported the NDAA's fluoride bill and we will need their help now.

Community water fluoridation has been on the NDA's legislative plate since 2004 and finally passed last year. The work continues, as many communities are now placing the issue on the November ballot. The scare mongers are once again coming out of the woodwork trying to worry the public. However, you have the best personal testimony about the positive effects of water fluoridation because many of you see patients from both communities...with and without fluoridated water.

As part of the ADA's Public Affairs Initiative, the ADA hired the Nebraska public relations firm of Bailey Lauerman to assist the NDA with implementation of community water fluoridation; part of your ADA dues at work. We have developed a packet of materials for your use when discussing water fluoridation with your local leaders.

Let's see, what else... oh yes, Medicaid.

As part of the Medicaid Reform Legislation, HHS proposed to cap adult dental Medicaid to $1,000 per year. The NDA, along with several other community organizations testified to the penny wise-pound foolish idea of "saving" costs, only to reap search in other areas such as emergency rooms. For example, we testified that a Medicaid patient receiving a full mouth extraction would not be able to afford dentures in the same year. What then?

Such a reality has already occurred as a NDA member called me this month to report this exact situation. What keeps the patient from going to a different dental office and seeking dentures? When HHS checks their records, the recent full mouth extraction will not have been recorded and the patient will appear to be within their $1,000 limit.

Grassroots Communications

All of the issues discussed above involve communicating with HHS and your state senator. I appear at hearings along with members of the Legislative Council, but your senators also need to hear from you about the harsh realities of what the NDAA Proposal can do, the benefits of water fluoridation, and the real world examples of cuts to dental Medicaid.
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Nebraska Dental Association July/August 2008
Dental Assistant Allowable Duties

What Current Nebraska Statutes and Regulations Say

§ 38-1107 Dental assistant, defined.
Dental assistant means a person, other than a dental hygienist, employed by a licensed dentist for the purpose of assisting such dentist in the performance of his or her clinical and clinical-related duties.

172 NAC 53.003.01 Authorized Services.
A licensed dentist is authorized to delegate to a dental auxiliary, other than a dental hygienist, only those procedures for which the dentist exercises supervision, for which he assumes full responsibility and which do not conflict with these regulations.

172 NAC 53.004.004 DENTAL ROENTGENOGRAMS
Any other dental auxiliary is hereby authorized under the supervision of a licensed dentist to take dental roentgenograms, but they shall not be authorized to do so on or after January 1, 1973, unless they have satisfactorily completed a course in dental radiology approved by the Board and the Department.

172 NAC 53.005 CORONAL POLISHING.
A dental auxiliary is hereby authorized, under the indirect supervision of a licensed dentist, to polish all exposed tooth surfaces with a rubber cup or brush driven by a conventional slow-speed hand piece, but they shall not be authorized to do so on or after January 1, 1997, unless they have met the following requirements: Attained the age of eighteen (18); and one of the following: Have graduated from a dental assisting training program which is accredited by the American Dental Association (ADA) and includes a coronal polishing course; or have one (1) year (a minimum of 1500 hours) of clinical work experience as a dental assistant and have successfully completed a course in polishing procedures which is approved by the Board and Department.

§ 38-1143 Assistant; certification required.
Any person who assists a dentist in the administration of general anesthesia, parenteral sedation, or inhalation analgesia shall be currently certified in basic life-support skills or the equivalent thereof.

I WANT YOU

The NDA needs you! The poster above was originally published as the cover for the July 6, 1916, issue of Leslie’s Weekly with the title “What Are You Doing for Preparedness?” We need you to contact the Board of Health, Chief Medical Officer and state senators regarding the NDAA Proposal.
Announcements

West District Dental Society Meeting

Due to the fact that the NMOM event will be held in the West District this year (Mitchell, Nebraska - Scotts Bluff County Fairgrounds on October 10 and 11, 2008), the West District will be holding a business meeting only in conjunction with the NMOM event.

By doing this, they are hopeful that ALL members of the West District will come out and help with the NMOM event, and at the same time, they will only be asking for one weekend of your time this Fall.

The business meeting will be held on Thursday evening, October 9, 2008, at the Gering Civic Center. There will be dinner provided for those helping with the NMOM set up. It is the hope of the West District that you and your staff will be able to come in the afternoon, check into the hotel, help set up for the NMOM event, and then come to Gering for the dinner and business meeting at the Civic Center.

2009 Annual Session

Be sure to mark your calendar for the 2009 Annual Session, April 2-4, 2009 in Omaha! Once again we will be at the Qwest Center and the Hilton Omaha. We have a lot of great things planned for this years’ meeting, including hands on clinics on both days. On Friday we plan to have an all day pedo speaker, a practice management speaker, and an endo speaker. On Saturday we’re planning an all day session for the entire dental team, a hygiene/perio program, an EFDA speaker, and an all day composites session.

The Five District Fall Meeting

The Five District Fall Meeting will be held at the Howard Johnson Riverside Inn in Grand Island, Nebraska, on Friday, September 19, 2008, from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Dr. Kaneta Lott, one of the most respected pediatric dentists in the United States, will be presenting her program, “Success and Profit: Understanding the Child Patient”. Bring your entire staff and earn 6 hours of CE.

Please watch your mailbox for registration information! New for this meeting - the ability to register online. We would encourage everyone to use this process when registering for this presentation. No credit card payments will be accepted through the mail.

Register Online!

Please visit the NDA website at www.nedental.org. Click on the “public” section, and look for the Five District Registration link.

Reminders to Board of Trustees & House of Delegates: The Board of Trustees will be holding their Fall meeting on Wednesday, September 18, 2008, beginning at 6:00 p.m. at the Howard Johnson Riverside Inn in Grand Island.

The House of Delegates will meet at 3:30 p.m. on Friday, September 19, 2008, immediately following Dr. Lott’s presentation.

NMOM Registration Open!

NMOM Volunteer Registration is now open! For more information or to register, go to the NDA website at www.nedental.org and click on the "NMOM LOGO". Once there, follow the easy instructions! Once your registration has been completed, you will receive an email confirmation. To save NMOM funds for future events, no additional information will be mailed.

Open House

To: All NDA Members and Staff

Dr. Paula Harre and her staff invite you to an Open House August 21st, 2008, between 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. at 6825 South 27th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Join us for food and refreshments as we congratulate designer, Dr. Michael Unthank, and his team for the “Outstanding Specialty Practice” and “Outstanding Design Efficiency” awards which were recently featured in the May issue of Dental Economics.

It is our pleasure to host this event for Dr. Unthank and his staff and provide an opportunity for everyone to see their winning design. Hope to see you there.
NEW ADDRESSES:

Dr. Brent Johnson (new practice opening in October)
Pediatric Dentistry, P.C.
3901 Pine Lake Road, Suite 250
Lincoln, NE. 68516
402-423-3322
www.pediatricdentistrypc.net

Dr. Robert Glandt
205 Stardust Lane
Georgetown, TX. 78628

Dr. David Minarik
1325 N. 185th Street
Omaha, NE. 68022

Correction - Previously listed as 6901, should be 6909

Dr. Carolyn Taggart-Burns
6909 South 157th Street, Suite C
Omaha, NE. 68136
402-891-9000
Fax 402-891-6781

Dr. Daniel Beninato
18009 Oak Street
Omaha, NE. 68130

Dr. Heidi Stark
3272 Salt Creek Circle, Suite A
Lincoln, NE. 68504
402-476-1500
402-476-1510 (fax)

Dr. Andy Stadler
2457 33rd Avenue
Columbus, NE. 68601

Dr. Stephanie Stanton
1105 South 13th Street, Suite 200
Lincoln, NE. 68701

Dr. Joseph Ramirez
4413 Chicago Street
Omaha, NE. 68131

NEW OR REINSTATED MEMBERS:

Dr. Hidehiko Watanabe
UNMC College of Dentistry
40th & Holdrege
Lincoln, NE. 68583
402-472-3049

Dr. Robert Noel
Dundee Family Dental
5006 Dodge
Omaha, NE. 68132

Dr. Mark Aubie (grad student)
UNMC College of Dentistry
40th & Holdrege
Lincoln, NE. 68583
402-472-6770

Dr. Eric Dendinger
513 South 13th Street
Norfolk, NE. 68701
402-379-2775

Dr. Kerin Burdette (grad student)
1220 N. 113th Court, #4702
Omaha, NE. 68154
314-898-9437

Dr. Meagan Bowles (new grad)
2503 South 140th Circle
Omaha, NE. 68144
402-383-3151

Dr. Mollie Morrison (new grad)
12100 West Center Road, Suite 110
Omaha, NE. 68144
402-330-5080

Dr. Mark McKenny
(with Rosenau Family Dentistry)
408 N. Platte Avenue
York, NE. 68467
402-363-5846

Dr. Michael Shnayder (grad student)
14625 California Street
Omaha, NE. 68154
402-397-7777

Dr. Natalia Bolamperti-O'Malley
(with Bolamperti Family Dentistry)
14801 West Center Road
Omaha, NE. 68144
402-330-2007

CLASSIFIED ADS
All ads with an NDA box number should be mailed to:
Nebraska Dental Association, 3120 "O" Street, Lincoln, NE. 68510

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS:
Must be submitted in writing, either by email, fax or mail.
Indicate the number of times in which the ad is to be published.
Rates for NDA Members (per issue):
50 words or less - $20.00. (Includes NDA website) 40 cents each add’l word.
Rates for non-NDA Members (per issue):
50 words or less - $40.00. (Includes NDA website) 55 cents each add’l word.
Replies to a NDA box number are an additional $1.00.
NOTE: Advanced payment for classified ads MUST accompany order.

DISPLAY ADVERTISEMENTS:
Artwork must be submitted in camera-ready format on a disk.
Indicate the number of times in which the ad is to be published.
Rates are as follows:
Full Page: $330.00 (1 time); $300.00 (3 times); $275.00 (6 times)
Fl Page: $215.00 (1 time); $185.00 (3 times); $165.00 (6 times)
Page: $120.00 (1 time); $110.00 (3 times); $100.00 (6 times)

Send Classified and Display Ads with remittance to:
Nebraska Dental Association,
3120 "O" Street, Lincoln, NE. 68510, Attn: Jody

DEADLINE: Ads are due on the 15th of the month preceding publication.
The inclusion of an advertisement in any NDA publication does not imply endorsement of the product or services, and the NDA reserves the right to reject any advertisement, for any reason.
Proposal for Licensure for Nebraska Dental Assistants
By the Nebraska Dental Assistants Association

Dental Aide:
This is an individual who has not graduated from a dental assisting program accredited by the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) and has not passed the Nebraska Dental Assistant Licensure Exam. This individual shall have attained the age of 18 and will be able to perform intraoral procedures only under the supervision of a licensed Dentist, Registered Dental Hygienist or Licensed Dental Assistant.

According to OSHA Standards any dental employee must receive OSHA Training in Bloodborne Pathogens and Hazardous Communication Standards within ten (10) days of employment and must update annually thereafter.

A Dental Aide may perform under the General Supervision of a licensed dentist, licensed hygienist or licensed dental assistant:

- Receive and prepare patients for treatment, including seating, positioning chair, and placing napkin.
- Prepare procedural trays/armamentaria setups.
- Perform sterilization and disinfection procedures.
- Process dental radiographs.
- Select and manipulate gypsums and waxes.
- Provide pre and post-operative instructions.
- Fabricate custom trays, to include impression and bleaching trays, and athletic mouthguards.
- Pour, trim and evaluate the quality of diagnostic casts.

A Dental Aide may perform under the Direct Supervision of a licensed dentist, licensed hygienist or licensed dental assistant:

- Transfer Dental Instruments.
- Mix Dental Materials.
- Maintain field of operation during dental procedures through the use of retraction, suction, irrigation, drying, placing and removing cotton rolls, etc.
- Chart existing restorations or conditions.

Licensed Dental Assistant:
This individual:

- Has attained the age of 18.
- Shall have graduated from a dental assisting program accredited by the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA).
- Shall be currently certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- Shall have passed an examination approved by the Nebraska Board of Dentistry.
- Shall complete thirty (30) continuing education credits every two years. Six hours will be in infection control and 4 hours in jurisprudence.

A Licensed Dental Assistant (LDA) may perform under the Indirect Supervision of a licensed dentist the following procedures:

- Remove sutures.
- Place liners and bases.
- Remove periodontal dressings.
- Intra- orally size, fabricate, place and remove temporary crowns and cements.
- Size and fit stainless steel crowns.
- Take bite registrations for diagnostic models for study casts.
- Perform pulp vitality tests.
- Dry canals with absorbent points.
- Remove permanent cement from supragingival surfaces with hand instrument.
- Place and remove post-extraction dressings.
- Place and remove rubber dam.
- Monitor vital signs.
- Apply topical anesthetic to the injection site.
- Apply and activate bleaching agents with non-laser light-curing device.
- Cure restorative or orthodontic materials in operative site with light-curing device.
- Prepare enamel and dentin for bonding by etching.
- Place, wedge and remove matrices.
- Perform Oral Brush Biopsy
- Apply desensitizing agents.
- Monitor nitrous oxide/oxygen analgesia with current CPR.

A Licensed Dental Assistant (LDA) may perform under the Direct Supervision by a licensed dentist the following procedures:

- Add medications to intravenous lines in the presence of a licensed dentist.

GRANDFATHERING: Any dental assistant may apply to become a Licensed Dental Assistant (LDA) for a period of one year from the effective date of the law. A dental assistant applying for licensure under the grandfathering provision must show proof of completion of Nebraska Board of Dentistry approved or an ADA Accredited Dental Assisting approved courses in Dental Radiology, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation and Coronal Polish. After that time, an individual must graduate from an ADA
Scope of Practice of Dental Assistants

Proposed by the Board of Dentistry

Accredited Dental Assisting Program and successfully pass the Nebraska Examination for Licensed Dental Assistant.

Note: In order to show the Board of Dentistry's proposed regulations for allowable duties for ALL dental assistants, the NDAA Proposal for Expanded Function Dental Assistants has been omitted.

53-0034
SCOPE OF PRACTICE OF DENTAL ASSISTANTS

53-004.01
Authorized Procedures

A licensed dentist is authorized to delegate to a dental assistant only those procedures for which the dentist exercises supervision, for which s/he assumes full responsibility and which do not conflict with these regulations.

53-004.01A The following procedures may be performed by a dental assistant under the general supervision of a licensed dentist:

1. Visually inspecting the oral cavity;
2. Exposing radiographs, after meeting the requirements of 172 NAC 53-005;
3. Making impressions except as prohibited in 172 NAC 53-004.02A item 15;
4. Applying topical anticariogenic agents (fluoride);
5. Removing periodontal dressings; and
6. Replacing temporary restorations.

The licensed dentist assumes full responsibility for all the aforementioned procedures delegated to a dental assistant, under his/her supervision.

53-004.01B The following procedures may be performed by a dental assistant under the indirect supervision of a licensed dentist:

1. Applying topical anesthetic agents;
2. Performing pulp vitality testing;
3. Coronal polishing, after meeting the requirements of 172 NAC 53-006;
4. Bonding orthodontic bands and brackets with light activated adhesives following the immediate inspection and approval by the dentist, and if the chosen technique requires coronal polishing, the dental assistant must meet the requirements of 172 NAC 53-006;
5. Placing retraction material;
6. Placing periodontal dressings;
7. Removing sutures;
8. Monitoring inhalation analgesia (nitrous oxide), only when the dental assistant holds a current CPR certification;
9. Placing matrices;
10. Removing matrices;
11. Placing rubber dams;
12. Removing rubber dams;
13. Fabricating temporary fixed prostheses;
14. Removing temporary fixed prostheses;
15. Oral brush biopsy;
16. Applying pit and fissure sealants following the immediate assessment and approval by the dentist;
17. Placing amalgam for condensation by the licensed dentist;
18. Applying desensitizing agents; and
19. Any other duties for which the dentist exercises supervision, for which s/he assumes full responsibility and which do not conflict with these regulations, including 172 NAC 53-004.02.

53-004.0
Prohibited Procedures

53-004.02A A dental assistant is not authorized to perform the following procedures under any level of supervision:

1. Diagnosis and formulating a treatment plan;
2. Surgery on hard or soft tissue;
3. Administering of local anesthesia, inhalation analgesia (nitrous oxide), parenteral sedation or general anesthesia;
4. Periodontal probing;
5. Scaling of teeth, including supragingival and subgingival regions and root planning with hand and ultrasonic instruments;
6. Curettage;
7. Cementing orthodontic bands and banded orthodontic appliances with self-curing cementation techniques;
8. Bonding orthodontic bands and brackets without the immediate inspection and approval of the dentist;
9. Altering or adjusting archwires without the immediate inspection and approval of the dentist prior to placement of the archwire;
10. Condensing and carving amalgam restorations;
11. Placing and finishing composite resin restorations;
12. Bonding orthodontic bands and brackets without the immediate inspection and approval of the dentist;
13. Cementing permanent restorations;
14. Atraumatic restorative therapy (ART);
15. Taking final impressions for immediate, treatment dentures and permanent prosthesis;
16. Applying in-office technique bleaching products;
17. Using a rotary instrument to remove any of the following: orthodontic bands, orthodontic brackets, orthodontic cement, or orthodontic bonding agents; and
18. Any other irreversible dental procedure or procedures which require the professional judgment and skill of a licensed dentist.

Note: Dental Roentgenograms and Coronal Polishing remain in the current regulations. See page 5.
Last fall, the Department of Health and Human Services delivered a letter to the Legislature intending to place an annual cap of $1,000 on adult dental Medicaid services.

As reported in the March/April NDA newsletter, the NDA responded with LB 1122, which placed adult dental Medicaid in the "mandatory" services section of the Nebraska statute. LB1122 was not advanced out of Committee.

On May 22nd, HHS held public hearings for comment on the proposed $1,000 cap and the NDA along with several other dentists and community organizations testified vehemently in opposition.

To no avail, effective July 1st, HHS is now implementing the $1,000 cap. HHS will not be mailing the bulletin to all dental offices. However, dental program staff will be including a copy of the bulletin with mailings to dental offices when returning dental prior authorizations.

The provider bulletin regarding the $1,000 cap is on the HHS web page. http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/med/pb/

The NDA raised the following issue at the May 22nd hearing:

The NDA believes that making the patient track their own limit amount is a burdensome requirement to place on a Medicaid patient because they will show up for an appointment not knowing if they have exceeded their $1,000 limit and not be able to pay for any services above the limit.

Even though Bulletin 08-18 states that providers may call HHS to determine if the patient has exceeded their $1,000 limit, that inquiry "may not include all treatment previously received by the patient." What then?

6-005.01A Providers Responsibility and Client Responsibility Regarding the Yearly Dental Limit:

Providers must inform a client before treatment is provided of the client's obligation to pay for a service if the client's annual limit has already been reached or if the amount of treatment proposed will cause the client's annual limit to be exceeded.

A client must inform a provider in advance of receiving treatment if a portion of his/her annual dental benefit amount has already been expended.

Questions and comments can be directed to Margaret Booth at HHS (402-471-9380), who will be handling dental phone calls regarding the provider bulletin.

2008 Transition Seminar & Opportunity Fair

The University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Dentistry would like to invite you to attend the 2008 Transition Seminar & Dental Opportunities Fair on Friday, November 7, 2008.

This year the program will be held at the College of Dentistry in Dixon Lecture Hall. The college is fortunate to have secured the services of Mr. Roger K. Hill, a member of The McGill & Hill Group, LLC. Hill, an accredited senior appraiser (ASA) of the American Society of Appraisers, is a member of the Institute of Business Appraisers, and a founder/charter member of the Practice Valuation Study Group. With over 26 years of experience in working with general dentists and specialists, Hill serves clients across the United States providing transition planning for practice sales, partnerships (buy-in/buy-out), practice mergers, associateships/compensation analysis, and financial forecasting (proforma).

The Opportunity Fair will be held in conjunction with the seminar. Attendees will be provided with a table and two chairs. Some tables can be provided with electricity (no internet connections). You can plan to attend one or both programs. These programs will give you an opportunity to meet students and discuss dental practice opportunities open to them after graduation.

Registration is required: $100 per person, Transition Seminar $50

When: Friday, November 7, 2008
Where: University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Dentistry
40th & Holdrege Streets
Lincoln NE 68583-0740
Lower Level Area & Dixon Lecture Hall

Seminar begins at 8:30 a.m., registration 8 a.m.

Opportunity Fair 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.; set up begins at 8:30 a.m. Sack lunch provided. Parking is available in Lot 20, north of the college.

The registration deadline is Friday, October 24, 2008. Seminar $100 per person. Opportunity Fair $50

For more information, contact Veronica McManamon, UNMC College of Dentistry, 40th & Holdrege Streets, Lincoln NE 68583-0740. 402-472-3285.
New patients are the lifeblood of dental offices. Successfully handling the initial phone call from potential new patients is critical to establishing these important relationships. Patients calling your practice for the first time may be dealing with numerous obstacles that are unknown to you. They may be fearful, or think the treatment will be too expensive, or perhaps they had a negative experience at another practice. It is your goal to put the patient at ease and address their concerns. Unfortunately, many practices put up an imaginary “shield” that prevents the patient from ever scheduling or keeping that first appointment.

How the "Shield" works

A "shield" is an unnecessary barrier or obstacle that causes practices to lose potential patients. Here are some examples of how a "shield" is used during a potential new patient call:

- Being inflexible in screening new patients. A potential patient calls and asks, "How much do you charge for a cleaning"? The dental team will not provide a quote over the phone, and instead, insists they come in for an exam and x-rays first. The potential patient only wants a cleaning, so the call is released. No appointment was made, the new patient is lost.

- Putting the caller on hold. The dental team is very busy. A potential new patient calls the office and is immediately placed on hold without an on-hold message, so they simply hang up. No appointment was made, the new patient is lost.

- Pre-judging a patient by their insurance. If the first (or second) question asked is the type of insurance the potential patient has, the patient might think the only thing the office cares about is being paid, rather than expert dental care. Or the potential patient might not have insurance or an insurance plan that is accepted by the practice, and gets embarrassed for having to admit they don’t. No appointment is made, the new patient is lost.

Overcoming the "Shield" with the ALASKA System

In each of these situations, as during most telephone calls, there is a certain flow to the conversation. Correctly responding to that flow and using the appropriate communication techniques are important to handling the call successfully. We created the ALASKA System to teach dental teams how to properly communicate with callers, helping to secure the maximum number of new patient appointments.

A - Answer the phone quickly and correctly, and don’t immediately put callers on hold.

- Answer within 2 rings. If the phone is ringing more than twice, it’s time to add another person to the front office team.

L - Listen to what the caller is saying.

- Don’t judge or predetermine need or try to quickly get off the phone so you can get back to more "important" tasks. Listen and respond to the person’s needs.

A - Analyze what they are saying to uncover hidden barriers or concerns.

- Do they want an appointment but are fearful of pain? Are they concerned about the cost?

S - Solve their problem-- this is your chance to shine.

- If they call you with a problem, "I need a new dentist." - Help them set the first appointment.

- If they call with a concern, "My last dentist said I need a lot of expensive work, but I don’t have a lot of money." - Explain how your practice makes treatment more affordable by offering a no interest payment program like CareCredit, and explain how it works.

K - Kindness, say something nice to the caller.

- Assure them they’ve made the right decision, “You’re going to love Dr. Jones, he is so gentle!” - Treat them like a friend. Be nice and kind first, then professional and businesslike.

A - Action, take action by asking them when they’d like to come in.

- Offer several choices for appointment times and dates that are available, “Would you like to come in today at 2:30? Or on Thursday at 1:00?” - Seize the opportunity to appoint the patient whether they’ve asked for an appointment or not.

Remember, when a potential patient calls, the dental office’s main goal is to secure an appointment. Properly Answering, Listening, Analyzing, and Solving their problem will help that person feel important. Treating them with kindness and taking Action by setting up their appointment will reinforce to them that they’ve made the right decision by calling you. Using the ALASKA System is a great way to help your patients feel good about their experience, and look forward to their first appointment.

Dr. Richard Madow and Dr. David Madow founded The Madow Group in 1989, an education and marketing company dedicated to helping dentists and their teams become more successful in their practices.

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September 12, 2008  
Implants: Locator Attachments, UNMC

September 18, 2008  
NDA Board of Trustees, Grand Island, NE, 6:00 to 8:30 p.m.

September 19, 2008  
5 District Meeting, Grand Island, NE, 8:00 to 3:00 p.m.

September 19, 2008  
NDA House of Delegates, Grand Island, NE, 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.

September 19, 2008  
Coronal Polishing for Dental Assistants, Creighton University

October 10-11, 2008  
Nebraska Mission of Mercy, Mitchell, NE

October 16-19, 2008  
ADA Annual Session, San Antonio

October 24, 2008  
Oral Pathology in the Dental Office, UNMC

November 7, 2008  
Transition Seminar & Dental Opportunities Fair, UNMC

November 7, 2008  
Endodontic Problem Solving: Current Therapeutic Consideration, Creighton University

December 12, 2008  
Anatomy of the Head and Neck, Creighton University

December 15 & 16, 2008  
Radiology for Dental Auxiliary, UNMC

April 3-4, 2009  
NDA Annual Session, Omaha, NE

Please submit your Calendar items to the NDA: email - nda@alltel.net or fax to (402) 476-2641

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NDA STAFF
David J. O’Doherty, Executive Director & Editor - davidodoherty@alltel.net
Jody Cameron, Executive Assistant - jodycameron@alltel.net