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CHOOSING THE DENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH ROUTE

BY JENNIFER GARVIN

As a first-generation college student and first dentist in her family, Lisa Begay, D.M.D., knows what it's like to overcome obstacles.

Growing up on the Navajo reservation in Oak Springs, Arizona, she faced extreme poverty and saw firsthand the importance of oral and overall health.

"The nearest health care facility was 30 miles away. That may not seem far for some, but it was quite a distance for community members without transportation or families with limited resources," Dr. Begay said. "Many of my relatives struggled with their oral health."

After graduating from the University of New Mexico in 2004, Dr. Begay worked at

the Albuquerque Indian Dental Clinic for six years before starting dental school at A.T. Still University. She received Indian Health Service scholarships for both hygiene and dental school.

"The day I left home, I was anxious about what lay ahead," she said. "I only had a \$100 in my pocket and dreams for a better life. I knew this was my only shot so I better succeed."

After earning her degree in 2014, she returned to Albuquerque and spent five years there before moving on to the Canoncito Band of Navajos Health Center in To'hajiilee, New Mexico, where she is currently the chief dental officer.

Continued on Page 4

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‘Our responsibility’: SPECIAL SMILES CLINICAL DIRECTOR HELPS PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ACCESS DENTAL CARE

BY MARY BETH VERSACI

As a clinical director with Special Smiles — the dental arm of the Special Olympics’ Healthy Athletes program, which offers free health screenings and education to participants — Emily Hahn, D.D.S., helps to meet the oral health care needs of athletes with intellectual disabilities.

The owner of Skyview Pediatric Dentistry in Town and Country, Missouri, Dr. Hahn became involved with Special Smiles in 2015 after being inspired to focus her career on caring for people with special health care needs by an instructor in her residency program. Dr. Hahn volunteers at Special Olympics events in Missouri, where her primary responsibilities include ensuring dental screenings go smoothly and helping to connect athletes to needed oral care.

“Oral health care is the No. 1 unmet health care need of patients with special health care needs,” Dr. Hahn said. “Now, it is our responsibility to change this statistic. In my opinion, the greatest barrier is the fear that many dentists have in

treating this population and the behaviors that may need to be addressed. Not caring for this population is neglect on our part.”

Dr. Hahn is also a pediatric dentist at St. Louis Children’s Hospital, where she exclusively treats children with special health care needs and their siblings. Patients at her private practice include children with special health care needs as well.

As a pediatric dentist, Dr. Hahn said it is important for general dentists to treat patients with disabilities, too, to help address their oral health care needs as adults. Volunteering with Special Smiles, which serves both children and adults, is a great opportunity to get their feet wet, she said.

“Many people say they go into dentistry to care for others,” Dr. Hahn said. “Your kind words, patience and compassion for those who don’t always receive this is remembered and oh, so appreciated.”

To learn more about Special Smiles, visit specialolympics.org/tag/special-smiles. ■



Dr. Hahn



Ready to help: Emily Hahn, D.D.S. (front, center), a clinical director with Special Smiles, volunteers with dental hygiene students during the Special Olympics Missouri State Outdoor Games in September 2019.

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Giving back

CHOOSING THE DENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH ROUTE

(continued from cover)



Dr. Ashley McQueen demonstrates brushing on a furry friend.

“I have experienced both sides of public health — being a patient who received care from the Indian Health Service and being the provider,” she said. “My experience had a profound effect on my decision to pursue a dental degree and return to the Native community.”

The Canonicito Band of Navajos Health Clinic is a tribally run clinic that provides comprehensive dental care and other services to more than 3,000 American Indian patients of all ages.

“The patients are incredible — they are thankful and appreciative for the services you provide,” she said. “The more time you spend in the community, the patients start to embrace you.”

She also pointed to some of the benefits that IHS and tribal clinics offer and said she is thankful for those who helped her get to where she is today.

“I am thankful for my guiding light and mentor, Dr. George Blue Spruce, who is the first American Indian dentist,” she said. “He had a long career in IHS and continues to mentor students to this day. I hope to carry on his legacy for future generations.”

Working within dental clinics at federally qualified health centers, or FQHCs, are another way new dentists can give back.

Ashley McQueen, D.D.S., was 10 when she realized she wanted to be a dentist. Her aunt was an office manager for a dental practice and she got the opportunity to shadow the dentist.

“I was able to watch over his shoulder and see what a day in the life was like as a dentist and I just grew a passion for the profession,” she said.

She was so passionate she even treated her fifth-grade class to a presentation on the anatomy of a tooth.

“It was pretty intense, but I enjoyed it,” she said.

Dr. McQueen’s interest in public health began at the Howard University College of Dentistry and during a subsequent general practice residency at Bronx Lebanon Hospital in New York.

“The amount of gratitude and gratefulness that these patients express after receiving dental treatment gave me such a great feeling

of fulfillment and purpose,” Dr. McQueen said. “I decided I wanted to provide my talent and services to those most in need.”

To do that, she returned to her hometown of Houston, Texas, and began working at the Lonestar Family Health Center, an FQHC in nearby Conroe. The center treats dental patients of all ages and provides comprehensive services on a sliding fee scale, which she helped implement.

“I love where I work because we have a state-of-the-art design with advanced equipment,” said Dr. McQueen who was promoted to dental director in 2015. “We pride ourselves on providing a welcoming and warm environment in which our patients can feel comfortable and relaxed while receiving high quality dental care.”

The FQHC also hosts and participates in outreach events to educate the surrounding community about the importance of proper oral health care.

“Working for a FQHC can be rewarding in knowing you are making a difference in people’s lives and, in most cases, improving their quality of life by decreasing the incidence and occurrence of oral disease,” she said.

Working for a FQHC can be rewarding in knowing you are making a difference in people’s lives and, in most cases, improving their quality of life.

For more information on working in public health settings, visit HRSA at bh.w.hrsa.gov/job-search.

For information about working within the Indian Health Service, visit IHS.gov/dentistry. ■

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Ask the Expert:

HOW DO I ENSURE A SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE PURCHASE?

BY CHRISTINE OLMSTEAD LOPEZ, CERTIFIED HEALTHCARE FINANCIAL PROFESSIONAL,
BMO HARRIS BANK

Dear Christine: *I am considering becoming a practice owner, but I've heard stories that make buying a practice sound like a nightmare. I am a planner by nature, so dealing with a lot of unknowns makes me anxious. How can I know how I solve for potential problems upfront?*

— No More Horror Stories

Dear No More: It's true that buying a practice can have its share of surprises, such as legal considerations and unexpected compromises.

However, there are some steps you can take now to ensure one of the biggest financial decisions of your life doesn't devolve into a tale of woe.

Build your credit: Be aware of any negative marks on your credit report. Obtain a free copy of your report and know your FICO score.

Research steps you can take to improve your credit score, which will translate into more attractive financing options.

Build your cash reserves: Your bank financing will include the purchase as well as working capital, but you need to plan for expenses above and beyond standard operating costs. If the roof leaks or a piece of expensive equipment fails, you don't want to be too reliant on credit cards or incur additional debt.

Know your production: The size of the practice that you purchase should reflect your personal ability to produce and manage. Review your production reports at your current practice, increase your speed, and cultivate relevant management experience prior to setting out on your own. You want to buy a right-sized practice for you, not too large or too small.

Think twice about location: Practices are difficult to move, as a change in location will likely trigger patient attrition. The location of the practice needs to be in a place where you will want to work, near to where you want to live. Is it someplace where you'd want to raise a family? Do you have existing community ties?

Assemble your dream team: In addition to input from your dental community, friends and family, find yourself a dental certified public accountant, a dental transition attorney, and a banker experienced in practice financing. This team will help assess the viability of the practice and can save you valuable time and money in the long run.

If you decide you want to be a practice owner, so many things will feel like they are outside your control. The above actions will help ease the way and give you confidence in your decisions when the time is right. ■

There are some steps you can take now to ensure one of the biggest financial decisions of your life doesn't devolve into a tale of woe.

A commercial banker since 2006, Ms. Olmstead Lopez advises mid- to large-size practices, leveraging her background in commercial credit underwriting and structuring, and providing industry-specific expertise and local market insight.

Editor's note: This article is provided by BMO Harris Bank, the ADA Member Advantage-endorsed provider for practice financing. Call 1-833-276-6017 or visit bmoharris.com/dentists for more information.

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5 ways to get involved in, **ADVOCATE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH**

New dentists are ideal advocates for public health, offering advice at the local level on issues such as water fluoridation and caries prevention. But involvement shouldn't have to start and end there.

Here are five ways new dentists can continue to incorporate and advocate for public health and access to care.

1 *International Dental Volunteering Opportunities*

While 2020 suspended many humanitarian organization's mission trips, those same organizations are planning to ramp up their efforts for later in 2021 and beyond. To learn more about international dental volunteering opportunities, check out internationalvolunteer.ADA.org.

2 *Mission of Mercy*

Events are scheduled around the country, including the MOM 'n' PA charitable mission, set for Sept. 24-25 at Temple University's Kornberg School of Dentistry in Philadelphia. MOMs are large-scale professional dental clinics that provide care to any patient at no cost to them, with the goal of treating the underserved and uninsured — those who would otherwise go without care. Contact your state dental society to see if there are upcoming MOMs in your area, and, if not, organize one.

3 *Give Kids A Smile*

Even during the pandemic, dental schools and practices continued holding Give Kids A Smile events throughout the country. While traditionally held in February, during National Children's Dental Health Month, GKAS events can be held any time of the year, with months of planning throughout the year to help children in need. Learn more at ADA.org/GKAS.

4 *Legislative Advocacy*

Advocacy is an avenue especially ripe for new dentist participation. In the Dec. 19, 2019, episode of the ADA's Beyond the Mouth podcast, ADA.org/beyondthemouth, ADA lobbyists talk about how to advocate for public health and dentistry.

5 *ADA's Community Dental Health Coordinator*

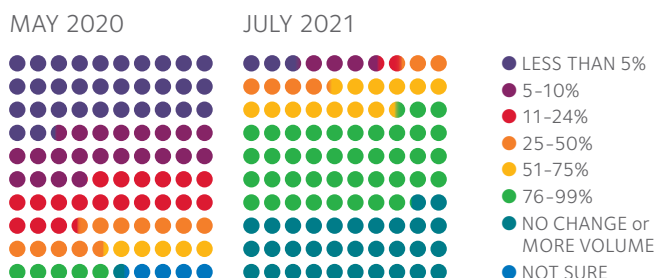
The program is a way for any member of the dental team to provide community-based prevention, care coordination and patient navigation to connect people who typically do not receive care from a dentist in underserved rural, urban and Native American communities. Forty-seven states have either a CDHC school program, a graduate of the program or a student in the program. Learn more at ADA.org/CDHC. ■

Public health dentists AND THE DENTAL CARE DELIVERY MODEL



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PATIENT VOLUME IN PUBLIC HEALTH SETTINGS



According to the latest data from HPI’s poll of dentists measuring the impact of COVID-19 on their practices, dentists in public health settings have maintained their dental care delivery “safety net.”

- As of the week of July 12, half of dental clinics/health centers are open at “business as usual” and nearly one-third of public health dentists report their clinic/health center has the same or increased patient volume compared to pre-COVID-19 levels.
- Also, as of the week of July 12, 19% of public health dentists are administering COVID-19 vaccines compared to 2% of private practice dentists.
- Still, challenges remain. In May, about two-thirds of public health dentists report it is extremely or very challenging to hire dental hygienists and dental assistants.

For more detailed results from HPI’s COVID-19 economic impact poll or to sign up for the monthly research panel, visit ADA.org/HPI. ■

COMPARED TO PRE-COVID-19 LEVELS,



Dental clinics/health centers are open at “business as usual”



NEARLY 1/3 of public health dentists reported same or increased patient volume

In case you missed it

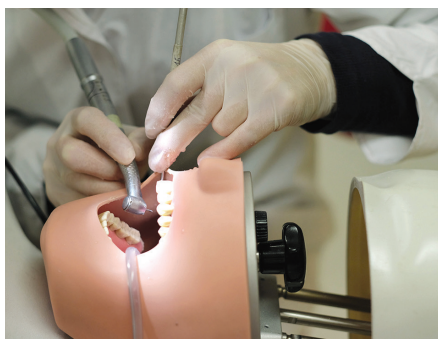


Image: Banannaanna / iStock / Getty Images

Dental licensure reform: The case for eliminating the clinical exam

Jonathan Nash, D.D.S., takes a look at the current landscape of dental licensure examinations and makes the case for bolder solutions to achieve meaningful reform.

Full story: ADA.org/eliminating



Touro College of Dental Medicine hosts first live hooding, awards ceremony

Touro College of Dental Medicine held its first live hooding and awards ceremony to celebrate its second class of graduates — a year after the COVID-19 pandemic forced the school to opt for an all-virtual commencement to honor its inaugural graduating class.

Full story: ADA.org/Tourocereomy



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Dr. Donald Jonker, left, and his husband, Kevin, celebrate their puppy's first birthday.



Dr. Bianca Velayo flexes after a workout. She said self-care has been crucial in preventing burnout.



Dr. Peter Markov paddleboarding in the Potomac River in Washington, D.C.

Observing National Wellness Month

NEW DENTISTS SHARE HOW THEY PLAN TO MAINTAIN, IMPROVE THEIR HEALTH

BY KIMBER SOLANA

August is National Wellness Month, a good reminder to focus on self-care and to promote healthy routines.

It comes as the ADA has shown a spotlight on wellness initiatives all summer, thanks to grant funding from Crest + Oral-B. Surveys of new dentists in 2020 showed that a challenging year for members and the profession had a significant impact on overall well-being. To view these mental, physical and financial wellness programs, visit [ADA.org/Wellness](https://www.ada.org/Wellness).

Here are some ways your new dentist colleagues plan to observe National Wellness Month:

Working in a field that can take its toll on your body over time, I believe it is imperative for dentists to actively take care of both their physical and emotional wellbeing. In order to maintain my health, I enjoy eating healthy and staying active by going running or strength training at the gym four to five times per week. This helps me to keep my stamina for those long work days and provides me with energy and mental clarity. I also find that setting aside time for some self-care helps me to maintain a healthy work-life balance. I enjoy spending time with my husband and our puppy, reading or relaxing at the beach.

— DONALD JONKER, D.D.S., CHICAGO

I schedule my workouts in my calendar and treat it just like a meeting or an appointment. I used to view self-care as indulgent or selfish but I learned that this "me time" was crucial in preventing burnout. Exercising helps me stay mentally and physically strong. It also motivates me to make healthier lifestyle choices like eating cleaner and drinking more water.

— BIANCA VELAYO, D.M.D.,
HENDERSON, NEVADA

I'll be trying to soak in as many sun rays as possible before the weather turns. I've been doing my best to disconnect from electronic devices when I can, and I've found a great hobby in paddleboarding. It's an easy way for me to explore new areas and disconnect from screens for a few hours. I love being surrounded by nature and the calm that comes with it. Making some new friends — mainly turtles and frogs — while getting a workout in always has me looking forward to my next adventure.

— PETER MARKOV, D.M.D.,
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

NEW DENTIST EMERGING INTO PRIVATE PRACTICE?

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