President's Message
October 2021 ADAA Update

By Betty A. Fox A.S., CDA, RDA, FADAA

American Dental Assistants Association

Coming to Terms
A Farewell from ADAA President Betty A. Fox

Since this will be my last ADAA Update article before my term ends at the end of October, I wanted to say thank you for allowing me to serve the 2020-2021 year as your ADAA President. It has been an honor and privilege to hold the position. The role is one I would not have thought possible for me in 1978 when I became a dental assistant. I wasn't able to look this far ahead as a young dental assistant, but looking back in quiet reflection, it has been a wonderful experience.

My career path was touched by many great people who helped me along the way. Some taught me how to do things and some gave advice. Many never understood why I did what I did. My family and friends didn't understand why I attended local monthly dental assisting meetings and yearly state dental assisting meetings. The didn't understand why I took personal time off from work to attend national dental assisting meetings. It was my passion and pride in the dental assisting profession that kept me interested in volunteering. I wanted to see what I could do to make the dental assistant an integral part of the dental team and help give other dental assistants the respect and acknowledgment they deserve.

My dental assisting instructors instilled in me the importance of a good work ethic at a young age; this carried on throughout my career. I was taught to take every class or continuing education course I possibly could. I learned every new skill I could to increase my value as a dental assistant. This was important to me because you never know where you are going to end up using that skill set. For example, I might not be working for an orthodontist, but I could one day. If there was an opportunity to take an ortho course, I took it. I was taught to learn all you can to make yourself a valuable asset to the employing dentist or to the next dentist you might interview with.

Every additional title or accomplishment you an list on a resume proves you are interested in staying in the dental assisting profession; that you are interesting in helping the dental practice grow; and that increasing your knowledge helps yourself, the dentist, and your patients.

In addition to assisting chairside, dental assistants do all of the ordering of supplies, equipment, and products. Giving purchasing power to the dental assistant takes a huge burden off the dentist. Purchasing gave me the opportunity to see and know which material worked best and which ones did not. If a product or instrument was not working well, I took the opportunity at dental meetings to look for companies that sold or manufactured the products I was interested in. I would take the information and/or a sample back to the office and present it to the dentist. By being responsible for purchasing supplies for the office, I had the opportunity to speak with sales representatives and used that as an opportunity to increase my knowledge about dentistry and dental assisting.

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My favorite part of being a dental assistant is the patients I have met and the friends I have made. There are always those certain patients you love to see their name on the schedule, and you love to see their smiling face when they walk in the door. They are more than patients; they are friends because of the relationship you have built with them during their visits to the office.

The same is true for the dental assistants I have met through ADAA. They are some of the best friends you could have. I have had the total support of my Knoxville Area Dental Assisting Society and my Tennessee Dental Assistants Association; without them I would not have been able to accomplish the things I have throughout my career. From my dental assisting instructor Mary Ellen Vaughn, who also became a best friend, to my former 4th District Trustee Nannett Hill, who mentored me into following her as a trustee, I thank you for your help and support. I also had so many dental assisting friends who have helped me during my term as ADAA President, and I appreciate all of them. Long phone calls and email discussions on important decisions that needed to be made helps when you have a friend who understands and is willing to help you with advice.

I must also thank the staff of SEVEN12 Management, as well as the former staff of SFA, since I had the opportunity to work with both this year. Although we had a transition during the middle of my term, leadership was able to have monthly meetings and accomplish many things this year. While the work will carry on after my term is over, I look forward to what can be accomplished next year.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your ADAA President in 2020-2021. I has been an honor and privilege for me. My hope is that something this year will help you keep your passion for dental assisting. ADAA and I hope you are encouraged to get involved and serve as a new officer, committee member, or district trustee on the national level. If you are not ready for the national level, please get involved and see where you can help support your local and state association. If I can help mentor you, please let me know by reaching out to me at bf@adaausa.org or bgfoxcda@yahoo.com. ■