President's Message
August 2021 ADAA Update

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

American Dental Assistants Association

Why ADAA? My Story on the Value of Membership

My story began when I graduated high school and all my friends were going to college. Not me. I didn't know what I wanted to do. A friend was going to an orientation at a local dental assisting program. She begged me to go with her. I said, "I don't want to look in people's mouths all day long!" LOL. Guess what! She ended up getting married and moving away, and I ended going to a Commission on Dental Accreditation dental assisting program the next year. Little did I know that would happen.

It was in the program when I began to see a lot more of what the world had to offer and the many opportunities available. I was blessed to have certified dental assisting instructors who opened our student eyes to the profession and the careers dental assisting could lead us to. Not only did they teach us the history of dental assisting and all it had to offer, but if it not for them, I would not have known about my very own professional organization: the American Dental Assistants Association.

It seemed like from the very first day of class, our dental assisting instructors began to mold us and make us into lifelong dental professionals. They stressed we were not just going to be working a job — we were going to be professionals. Dental assisting is a professional career, and we should be proud of who we are and what we are being trained to do! They also told us we needed to be members of our professional organization. We all signed up to be ADAA student members. They told us often how important it is to belong to your own professional group dedicated to training and educating dental assistants and how important and proud we should be that we had ADAA to support us.

One of the things they told us: being an ADAA member was a gold star on a resume. When you show the dentist you value your career enough to be a member of your professional organization, it makes you stand out from all of the other applicants. There's the old saying "cream of the crop," which means the best of anything in the fields, and that's what ADAA members are — the best in the field! Another valuable experience gained through membership is holding an office at the local, state, or national level. It shows you are involved and care about learning more and doing more: qualities that stand out on an application or in a job interview.

There is tremendous value in the friendships and mentorship you gain getting to know dental assistants from across the United States and other countries. When I think about some of my fellow dental assistants scattered across the country — Claudia in California, Nanette in North Carolina, Judy in Florida, Claudia in Massachusetts (just to name a few) — I hold them near and dear to my heart because our friendships developed through ADAA. As we get older, the big joke now is we need a retirement community just for dental assistants because we have such a bond. We love every dental assistant we meet along our way.

By networking through ADAA and at dental meetings, you meet a wealth of contacts, such as educators and representatives for dental-related companies and laboratories. These are great resources to reach out to for new supplies or additional education. Our social media project on Facebook Live has also been a lot of fun, and our presence on other social media platforms is growing. This is a great way to see what is going on in the dental assisting profession and make new friends.

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Many states have mandatory education requirements before working as a dental assistant, and some states have yearly mandatory continuing education requirements. Whatever the case in your state, it is under the purview of the state dental board. You should always keep up to date on the latest news to make sure you are practicing correctly under your state's legal guidelines for dental assistants. If you are required to maintain continuing education, or if you want to learn about a specialty, new product, or material, the ADAA Education Library has a vast collection of courses and webinars on a variety of business and clinical subject matters.

By utilizing the continuing ADAA's Education Library, I furthered my knowledge on a variety of topics and completed my Fellowship in ADAA. I proudly use the FADAA initials in my signature after my name. I am also very close to finishing my ADAA Mastership (much delayed in 2020 for obvious reasons).

Another great ADAA benefit is the ability to share your expertise with the membership, either through an article in our journal, *The Dental Assistant,* or by teaching via a webinar. If you are interested in either opportunity, please reach out to ADAA's Sidonia Peto. She is the association's education director and will guide you through the process.

I have enjoyed the added security in knowing my ADAA membership includes $50,000 professional liability insurance and $2,000 accidental death and dismemberment insurance. These gave me comfort as a practicing oral healthcare professional. I can also benefit from an identity theft protection plan, should the need arise.

From discounted EPA compliance software to supplemental medical plans to discounts on travel, scrubs, and office supplies, there are so many benefits ADAA provides to help dental assistants in their professional and personal lives. When it comes to finding a new job or posting an opening at your office, please take advantage of ADAA's partnership with DentalWorkers.com and DentalJobs.com.

I hope I've encouraged you to continue your membership. Invite your co-workers and friends to join ADAA so they too can benefit from all we have to offer. By using all the resources of ADAA, you can reach new heights in your profession and go as far in your career as you desire. You'll be recognized as a highly trained and educated dental assistant and oral healthcare professional. There are many dental assistants with outstanding accomplishments in the profession who have reached for the stars, and many hold degrees and titles proving how hard work and dedication pay off in the end. I encourage you to reach for the stars in your dental assisting career and continually work to provide the best oral healthcare for your patients. The more knowledge and expertise you have as a dental assistant, the more the entire dental office will benefit and the more your patients will notice and feel comfortable in your care.

With the increase of Covid-19 cases on the rise again, I hope everyone has been able to obtain a vaccination. If you have not yet been vaccinated, I encourage you to consider doing so. We want all dental assistants to take good care of themselves and to practice in a safe and healthy environment. ■

PS: Please share your successes with your friends at ADAA. We want to celebrate your accomplishments and showcase you in our journal and e-newsletters!