



Nebraska

Dental Hygienists' Association

NDHA NEWSLETTER - July 2020

NDHA believes in helping dental hygienists achieve their full potential as they seek to improve the public's oral health. We support your goals by helping to ensure access to quality oral health care; promoting dental hygiene education, licensure, practice and research; and representing your legislative interests at the local, state and federal levels.



A Message from Your President

Heather Hessheimer, RDH 2020-21 President

In all of my newsletter articles as Vice President and President Elect, I've tried to include a little "getting to know me" tidbit. I think I'll continue that tradition throughout this year as President as well.

So fun fact #3: before I became a dental hygienist, I wanted to be an astronaut! I know it sounds like I was just a little kid, but this was actually "What I wanted to be when I grew up" right before I chose dental hygiene.

I was a junior in high school, and I was looking into joining the Navy upon high school graduation so I could eventually make it to NASA. Astronomy has always interested me and I was very serious about this path for my future.

Then I met the boy who would eventually become my husband, Brandon. You could say I was star struck and it made me lose interest in my military career, but I figured I could Reach for the Stars in any other path I take, just not the literal version. When I set on my path for a dental career, I talked to my school counselors and they helped me start an internship shadowing at various dental and dental specialty practices in town, with the intent to become a dentist. Much to my surprise, I fell in love with watching the calculus on the lingual of the mandibular anteriors being removed and there was no going back from that trajectory. I haven't regretted it a day in my life.

I may have never made it to NASA, but I sure feel like I am still reaching the stars in many ways with our profession. Becoming a dental hygienist was just me reaching for my first star. After graduation I saw the whole sky of stars and I continuously find new goals to strive towards. With the help of many mentors, I started to see the Northern Lights of stars. This next year I hope to help you all reach for your stars and set new goals beyond that as you go. Your NDHA Executive Board is working on several ways to do this.

1. **Unleashing Your Potential - Nebraska.** As some of you are familiar, ADHA hosts an annual Unleashing Your Potential conference in our headquarters city of Chicago where leaders from across the nation come

to experience ADHA and grow; grow as leaders, professionals, and individuals. ADHA is strategic as they need to grow leadership for officer positions, trustees, delegates, and committees so this helps them fill their slate going forward. In return, attendees love the personal growth they receive. Starting about two years ago, right after I was elected as your NDHA Vice President, I was charged with the task of thinking about how we bring this phenomenal national leadership conference to the Nebraska state level. With the help of many NDHA members input and our corporate sponsor, Crest Oral B, I am happy to share that next month we will be hosting our very first Unleashing Your Potential-Nebraska! Assuming the pandemic doesn't continue to halt our efforts! We wanted this conference to mimic the national event as much as possible and I am happy to report we received more applications than we had spots. While I hated to have to tell people that they were not selected, I truly hope this is something worth being elite and that they all apply again in future years. Watch our Facebook page and upcoming newsletters for pictures of our inaugural event!

2. **ADHA Unleashing Your Potential Changes.** With the limitations on travel and a desire for dental hygienists across the nation to grow as leaders, ADHA is going to take a new approach to their legendary Unleashing Your Potential conference as well. They are considering the possibility of allowing unlimited attendees for a new virtual conference and even those who have attended in the past could attend. Be sure to keep your eye out for this amazing growth opportunity!
3. **Book Clubs.** NDHA is working on more social gatherings and have seen an interest from members in growing as professionals through networking via book clubs. Growth from reading inspiring books and fun discussions with peers could be just the change you want to see for yourself in 2020! We will be communicating our plans when we have leaders ready to begin these groups.

Whether 2020 has made you feel like a shooting star or has you pulling toward a black hole, the best view of our stars is on the darkest night with no clouds. So take this darkened time to clear your head so you can see your goals clearly and use this time for personal growth! Get yourself out there and do something for YOU.

Reach for Your Stars!

Jason Brisbin 2020-21 NDHA President Elect



I don't think I was assigned one, but I wanted to do one anyways. Whitney will be doing the one for membership. I didn't have word at work so I have it below:

About a month ago I ran across an excellent article from one of my favorite essayists, Malcom Gladwell. I have learned throughout my education, and my life in general, that what seems "common sense" isn't always right and that what is considered "common sense" seems to change over time. Gladwell is a master at approaching concepts from the unique angles required to break through the fallacies of "common sense" thinking and better approach the complex truth of our shared reality. When I ran across his article The Art of Failure, I was immediately intrigued. I have failed so many times throughout my life. Sometimes this was clearly my fault. Most of the time the reasons for my failure were complex and, on occasion, well out of my control. I began thinking about the complexities of failure and a concept that Gladwell discusses called the stereotype threat. Back when I first read this I wanted to write this article exploring how stereotype threat may affect leadership in our profession, but it turns out that this is also very timely given the national conversation on race and privilege taking place right now.

I grew up in semi-rural central Nebraska. I was born in Kearney, moved the small

town of Cairo for several years, and spent all of my middle school and high school years just outside of Grand Island. It wasn't until I moved to Omaha and went to college that I began to realize that how I had interacted with the world as a white male from central Nebraska was not the same way everybody had interacted with the world. Since then I have been on a lifelong journey to understand how the diverse peoples of this world interact with the environment around them. I find myself craving diverse perspectives to learn about the wide variety of challenges that both individuals and groups face that affect their ability to achieve their full potential.

Stereotype threat is a concept that was presented in the mid 1990's by researchers at Stanford. Stereotype threat is the idea that belonging to a group that has a stereotype attached to it negatively affects performance. For a minimally controversial example, Gladwell's article references a study at Tufts university exploring the stereotype "white men can't jump". The study had two groups of white men, one with a white instructor, one with a black instructor. They were given a series of tasks, which they were then asked to repeat. In the group with the white instructor, the participants improved when they repeated the task. In the group with the black instructor, the participants made fewer improvements, or no improvements at all. This is just one study providing evidence that reminders of a stereotype affect performance. For white men such as myself, these reminders are few and far between but for women and minorities, the reminders are everywhere. This is something that I have begun to realize more and more in my adult life as I explore the experiences of others.

One of the above referenced researchers at Stanford is Claude Steele. He wrote a fantastic essay for the Atlantic called *Thin Ice: Stereotype Threat and Black College Students*. I would highly encourage all of you to read this essay. In it, he explores the research involved with the black performance gap in colleges in the 1990's, something that still takes place today. In their research, they explored stereotype threat to determine if this could be having an effect on performance. The "common sense" ideas at the time stated that personal or societal issues could be involved. To quote the article: "Does the problem stem from something about black students themselves, such as poor motivation, a distracting peer culture, lack of family values, or—the unsettling suggestion of *The Bell Curve*—genes? Or does it stem from the conditions of blacks' lives: social and economic deprivation, a society that views blacks through the lens of diminishing stereotypes and low expectations, too much coddling, or too much neglect?"

In a series of cleverly designed studies they determined that, not only did stereotype threat negatively affect test scores in black students but, perhaps not intuitively, it was the most capable, caring, and motivated students that were affected the most. These most capable students were so afraid of falling into the stereotype, that they made subtle errors that hampered their performance. This could be as simple as obsessing over an answer on a test instead of going with their first instinct or obsessing over material so much that they lost the big picture. Either way by holding back they were not able to let their talents run free, and performed worse than their white male colleagues. I found this to be particularly fascinating as it runs counter to the current cultural narrative that a lack of talent due to cultural or societal issues is the prevailing factor in the achievement gap. This research implies otherwise.

After reading these two articles, I began thinking about what other stereotypes exist in our society. Such as men are better at math than women, men are better scientists than women, black people are lazier than white people, and so many more. I noticed a few things as I searched my brain. The first was, setting aside dancing and jumping related stereotypes, there are very few negative stereotypes associated with white men, but so many associated with women and minorities. It is obvious that an organization such as ADHA is primarily women and those who have been around awhile know that many of the negative stereotypes surrounding women are disproven daily by the wealth of talent and knowledge that permeate our profession. Despite this, I can't help but wonder what opportunities for growth in the dental hygiene profession have been squandered by the stereotypes our society has placed on the members of our organization. How many talented people have failed not because they were incompetent, but because they were so worried about how society would

view them that they were unable to unleash their full potential.

I don't have an answer to that. I wish that I did. What we have to ask ourselves is how to make our organization safe and inclusive enough that we draw out an individual's full potential. How do we get people to see past the fear of how they might be seen and to how letting their talent flow can lead to success? I think it starts with understanding that psychological trappings like these exist. Perhaps by recognizing the complexity of human thought and experience we can strive to do a little better by those around us each day.



Legislative Committee Update

2020-21 Co-Chairs:

Deb Schardt, RDH, PHRDH
Joey Enright, RDH

Amid the Coronavirus pandemic, numerous accommodations are being made to prevent barriers to healthcare during our declared state of emergency. As the pandemic began to impact the region, the Nebraska Board of Dentistry requested the Governor allow for provisional licenses for new graduates until the March 1 renewal. An executive Order was signed by Governor Pete Ricketts on 6/17/2020 allowing new graduates in many healthcare fields, including dentistry and dental hygiene, to apply for provisional licensing until board exams are successfully completed or by December 31, 2020, whichever is sooner. Nebraska's Dental Hygiene Programs had scheduled their board exams prior to this order with Central Community College taking WREB June 12-13th, and University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) taking CRTDS June 26-27th.

In response to COVID-19, testing agencies on both state and national levels are making changes in their testing administration. We applaud the graduating class of 2020 for their resilience in navigating these uncertain times! In 2018, the ADHA House of Delegates voted to support the elimination of the patient procedure-based, single encounter clinical exam for candidates who are graduates of CODA accredited dental hygiene programs who are eligible to take the National Board Dental Hygiene Examination. This year, the Joint Commission on National Dental Exams has reduced the length of the National Hygiene Board Exam to less than 4 hours and has significantly increased the number of testing sites across the country to accommodate graduates while staying in compliance with government directed health measures.

This June, UNMC, in collaboration with CRDTS, and with the approval of the Nebraska Board of Dentistry, administered the nation's first Clinical Manikin Dental Hygiene Licensure Examination in response to challenges stemming from COVID-19. According to CRDTS, it has spent the last few years developing all-manikin examination procedures as an option for the periodontal and restorative procedures traditionally administered on a patient.

Multiple state boards have approved the results and use of these exams for licensure during the pandemic. Because clinical boards could change towards a manikin based exam in the future, it is important that the professional community research manikin based exams and the skill sets they will be testing.

We would like to extend a sincere thank you to all of you who sent in testimony for the May 27th Rules and Regulations hearing on chapters 53, 56 and 57, particularly Heather Hessheimer, who testified on behalf of NDHA. The Nebraska Board of Dentistry will review the compiled information at their next meeting on July 17. Our bill, LB312 that will allow public health dental hygienists to perform their full scope of practice, with the exception of local anesthesia, nitrous oxide and scaling and root planing, in public health settings is still on final reading. With the legislature still uncertain on how the rest of the session will play out, we will not know the outcome until the legislature reconvenes. We will continue to monitor these meetings to best protect the public and defend the dental hygiene scope of practice. As we move forward in representing NDHA and work on our strategic plan we would love to hear from you personally on what direction you would like us to move in. Please reach out to Joey Enright at joey.enright@mdpweb.net or Deb Schardt at debschardt@icloud.com to give us feedback on what matters most to you!

PNDHA Chair

Nicole Benigno, RDH

Looking at the first half of 2020 our roles as dental hygienists have been brought to light and given, not only hygienists, but those we impact with our careers a true sense of what it is that we set out to accomplish every day we go to work. Let us take a moment to reflect on some positive from this year.



First and foremost, we as an association of men and women that make up dental hygienists have had a pretty good idea as to what do for our patients. We are prevention specialists striving to maintain our patients' overall health by working with them every so many months, trying to do so much with such a limited time. Now, more than ever, if there was any doubt that we were actually preventing disease I hope that these past few months off have given clarity that we truly do matter to each and every patient. Whether we have a prophylaxis patient or a periodontal maintenance patient we can see the difference of not being a part of their health process.

Secondly, I think it is fair to say that our patients have also realized how important it is to maintain scheduled hygiene appointments and why we set the frequency of appointments the way we do. This year has proven that what we say to them in the office goes a long way at home. Our advice and instruction is truly being heard. Patients are practicing good home care even more so as their appointments have been delayed. After appointments have been moved, rearranged and moved again patients have shown appreciation more so for our services to care for their health. If there was ever a time to reflect the importance of what we have done and continue to do for our patients this is the time. Let the past time away from our patients' continue to feed the spark that has begun in our patients' recognition of the importance of their oral health. This year must be a positive change, accept the challenges it presents as opportunity to become better humans and in that clinicians, as well.

Nicole Benigno, PNDHA Chair

Diane M Alden, PHRDH

Northern Component Chair

Hello from the Northern Component,



I am tired and frustrated with the pandemic roller coaster. I am praying all dental hygienist are staying safe and healthy.

I am pleased to announce our new Northern Component Chairperson, Claire Snyder from Burwell. She graduated with honors from Central Community Dental Hygiene College and received her license this past week. She is employed in Burwell where she started working as a dental assistant. Claire is married to Derek, who is a pharmacist.

Please take time to give her a big welcome. You will be hearing from her soon with the agenda for 2020-2021 I will be available to help Claire with any plans she has for the Northern Component.

Tom Wekluk, RDH Delegate Chair, Nebraska

The First Ever Virtual House of Delegates was amazing. The initial thought of over the internet was a not the elephant in the room, but the mountain. So many small things had to be covered for each and every participant. The staff had to practice, adjust and anticipate even the slightest problem. Somehow, it all went surprisingly well. We had to adjust, learn and innovate.



We adjusted to the computer screen as our source of information. We adjusted to meetings, social hours and debates all on computer. We adjusted to giving in to technology despite our overwhelming and unanimous fear of computer overlords.

From every mistake or technical problem we all began to learn. We learned that technology is awesome as long as it works. We learned that we miss person to person debate. We learned to listen better due to lack of video of the person speaking. We also learned to use new and interesting platforms to perform our duties.

The ADHA as a whole is better because of this experience. We found ways to innovate. Expressing our concerns and our ideas. Things adjusted in an amazing manner. Each glitch was handled with patience and laughter. Our future House of Delegates will never be the same. Some of the platforms we used may be used during live HODs. We know how to be more patient in this instant gratification culture technology has created for us.

We adjusted, we learned and we innovated. We conducted our business and I was proud to be a part of it. All of the information on the House of Delegates actions are on the membership section of the ADHA website. If your not a member, you already know my response.

Whitney Crist, RDH Membership Chair

First off, let me thank you for your membership! During uncertain times and tightening budgets, investing in your profession is more important than ever. Your investment of time, talent, and treasure allows us to band together as an association. It is



during critical times and cultural shifts that shape the future. As a collective body of hygienists, we have the honor of directing the outlook of our profession.

I am not going to sugarcoat it. I want to acknowledge how trying it is to be a hygienist at this time. We are dealing with a lot of challenges; not only within our occupations, but with family and personal responsibilities as well. Having hard conversations and making tough decisions is the only way to turn this time into an opportunity. It's an opportunity to send a message to the public and to our employers. Now is the time to use our education and knowledge to improve the safety and wellness of all; not only for ourselves, but our patients and families as well.

The way to start the process of improvement within our profession is through ADHA. We are stronger TOGETHER. I realized this during our recent virtual House of Delegates (HOD) meetings. In addition to helping with the membership committee, I was able to serve as an Alternate Delegate. During the HOD, delegates make decisions on policy and bylaws which set the foundation for what ADHA supports and advocates. The following is just a sample of what was accomplished this summer. The HOD passed policy stating that ADHA will advocate for dental hygienists to be included in local, state, and national crisis response policies.¹ Policy was also adopted regarding the support and acknowledgment of registered dental hygienist who are trained in Orofacial Myofunctional Therapy.² Another was passed encouraging hygienists to obtain a National Provider Identification (NPI) number.³ All of these policies are important to creating the stepping stones of where the profession will go moving forward. It will take time, a lot of work, and a ton of patience.

An instance of how these policies can come to fruition and benefit the members is the addition of ADHA's new CE Smart feature. There is policy in place that states that ADHA will advocate "continued competence, lifelong learning and ongoing professional development for dental hygienists".⁴ CE Smart does just that - it is a new, great benefit for members. With new content added monthly, members have access to numerous free or deeply discounted CE. CE Smart also allows users to track their CE, including "External Training" (CE earned from other sources than ADHA). This means we get to store and track all of our CE in one convenient place - How great is that?!

I realize the many challenges we face and it is easy to become disheartened. However, it is these same challenges that create new opportunities. Something as simple as a good CE can help refuel and reignite your passion for the profession. I urge you to take advantage of your ADHA membership, seize this opportunity, and get involved. What do you want the future of dental hygiene to look like?

References

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