President’s Message

Staycations and Returning to the Classroom

For many, the month of August brings to mind end-of-summer vacations for the family and preparing to return to school. For August 2020, many of those vacation plans were changed to staycations in response to the concerns over the increase in coronavirus cases in many parts of the country. It has been interesting to hear the creative solutions that our members have put into action to help them enjoy their vacation time with their families in a safe, healthy, and enjoyable way. Thank you for the beautiful pictures that have been shared from the beach and mountain vacation spots (all while responsibly wearing masks and social distancing of course 😊).

The leadership at the American Dental Assistants Association (ADAA) has been busy during the month of August looking for ways to best represent dental assistants across the country in a variety of ways. I would like to share a few of those actions with you in the update this month.

The Committee on Legislation (CoL) continues to work on the Call to Action for mandatory infection control education legislative/regulatory efforts. A special thanks to the CoL and the Council on Education and Professional Development for their work in developing the Performance Evaluations on Infection Control documents to address the 4-hour clinical component called for in the Call to Action effort. ADAA needs the help of both members and nonmembers to keep the momentum going. We would like to thank those individuals at the state level that have brought the Call to Action to the attention of their state dental boards. We received exciting news that at least one state dental board has added this effort to their agenda in August for discussion.

A special thank you to the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD) for reaching out to ADAA and asking if our two organizations could sit down and discuss our respective letters to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). On Friday July 31 at 7:00 p.m., AGD President Dr. Connie White, AGD President-Elect Dr. Bruce Cassis, AGD Executive Director Max Moses, and Associate Executive Director Dan Buksa joined myself, ADAA President-Elect Betty Fox, ADAA Immediate Past President Natalie Kaweckyj, and ADAA Executive Director Dr. John Kasper on a Zoom meeting. This allowed us the chance to meet one another “face-to-face.”

The topics of discussion included the letters to OSHA as well as the ADAA Call to Action. The outcome of the meeting was in my mind a better understanding of AGD’s intentions as well as ADAA’s concerns. The most important takeaways were a strengthened relationship and shared belief in the value that dental assistants bring to the provision of dentistry in the dental office, the need to work together to ensure the safety of all dental healthcare personnel (DHCP), and the appreciation that dentists
have for their dental assistants. Moving forward, our two organizations will be looking at opportunities to collaborate and partner with one another on ways to support the professional growth of dental assistants.

On August 12 at 7:00 p.m., the Council on Finance held a Finance Town Hall aimed at giving ADAA members the opportunity to ask questions related to the finances of the association. Facilitators included myself, ADAA President-Elect and Council on Finance Chair Betty Fox, ADAA Immediate Past President Natalie Kaweckyj, and ADAA Executive Director Dr. John Kasper. Discussion topics with poll questions included ways to bring in non-dues revenue such as special promotions with bundled CE (3 for 2) for nonmembers and potentially charging a minimal fee to members for live webinar courses as well as increasing the nonmember fee for these course offerings. Thank you to those in attendance for providing input and feedback on these topics for us to share with the members of the Board of Trustees and Council on Finance.

As for returning to the classroom, there are still many unknowns for both traditional schooling (K-12) as well as dental assisting education programs. In response to questions and concerns from our ADAA dental educators, the Council on Education and Professional Development will be hosting an Educators Town Hall on Thursday, August 27, at 7:00 p.m. CDT. Thank you to Sarah Stream, Chair of the Committee on Social Media and Technology, for posting a survey on the ADAA Facebook page to determine the topics of most interest to dental educators. The topics chosen include drops in class size, lack of hands-on experience due to online learning, safety of staff and students due to Covid-19, and finding clinical sites that will take students. We hope that you will join us as we address these concerns together and look for solutions to help everyone feel more comfortable as they return to the classroom.

We would like to thank the Organization for Safety, Asepsis and Prevention (OSAP) for inviting myself and ADAA President-Elect Betty Fox to join their 2020 Virtual Annual Session “A Clear Vision for Dental Safety” on August 13-15. The coronavirus pandemic has certainly emphasized how important infection control and prevention education is to the role of the dental assistant. We appreciate the partnership and collaboration between OSAP and ADAA as we all work together to ensure the safety and wellbeing of both patients and DHCPs. As part of our collaborative efforts, a special thank you to Michelle Lee, OSAP Executive Director, for providing ADAA the opportunity to participate in the OSAP - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Division of Oral Health (CDC-DOH) listening session on August 28. We appreciate the chance to share feedback and input from the perspective of the dental assistant.

These are just a few of the activities that the ADAA leadership has been involved with in the month of August as part of our mission to address the needs of dental assistants (clinical and business), dental educators, and students throughout the United States. Stay safe and be well. I look forward to “speaking” with you in September. Please feel free to reach out to me at rrixse@adaausa.org.