Getting to Know You

Dr. Ashley Seals
Dr. Ashley Seals is a periodontist in Alexandria, Virginia.

Why dentistry?
I love dentistry because it’s the perfect balance of art and science. As a periodontist, I love helping to shape smiles through implants, esthetic crown lengthening and soft tissue grafting.

Why are you an ADA member?
I joined the ADA to be a part of a network of dentists who are organized around issues important to me such as dental student loan debt relief.

What has been the best time of your career so far?
Switching from working as a periodontist in a general dentist’s office to working in a practice limited to periodontics has been an amazing way for me to focus on my specialty and advance in my field more than I ever could before.

When I’m not practicing, I’m:
Enjoying international cuisine, live performing arts and outdoor activities.

One fun fact about me:
So far I’ve traveled to 16 countries, and I’m planning to visit one new country a year for each year of my 30s.

Helping new dentists, dental students find success

From easing the burden on student loans and financial planning to helping recent graduates find a job and getting involved in advocacy, the ADA offers new dentists — who have different needs than more seasoned dentists — a plethora of services, resources and benefits to help them thrive in their professional and personal lives.

“The ADA is your one-stop shop for resources pertinent to the new dentist, now and throughout his or her career,” said Dr. Chris Hasty, ADA New Dentist Committee vice chair. “From patient education to professional resources, the ADA delivers with quality and credible information.”

Dental students and new dentists receive benefits all other members get, including travel benefits, health and wellness information, continuing education programs and access to care initiatives. However, certain ADA products and services are tailored to their needs.

Finances

Adjusted for inflation, the average dental school debt for the class of 2000 was $118,515. For the class of 2014, it was $247,227, according to the annual American Dental Education Association’s Survey of Dental School Seniors. Add in the cost of moving to a new area and/or starting a practice, and it can get overwhelming.

The ADA provides dental students and new dentists with resources to help them stay on track for a bright financial future.

The ADA announced Sept. 10 an exclusive endorsement of Darien Rowayton Bank, known as DRB, that allows ADA members an opportunity to refinance existing federal and private student loans at a lower rate.

Through the endorsement, qualifying ADA members receive an additional 0.25 percent discount in the loan rate, which could result in savings in the tens of thousands of dollars, on average, in interest. For more information on the program, visit student.dbank.com/ADA.

Provided by Wells Fargo Practice Finance, and developed with dentists in mind, the Center for Professional Success also offers business planning calculators (Success.ADA.org/calculators), which can help new dentists and dental students determine how much they can responsibly afford to borrow for personal and business use. Other calculators available are the loan payment calculator, which estimates monthly loan payment. The loan term calculator helps dentists see how much faster they can pay off an existing loan by adding an additional fixed amount to their monthly payments.

Licensure

Dental licensure marks the transition between dental school and dental practice. The ADA provides licensure information on ADA.org and has a licensure manager on staff who can provide guidance. The Board of Trustees convened a task force this year on licensure and discussions continue.

Finding a job

The ADA CareerCenter is the official online job board of the ADA, a resource for searching dental career opportunities or recruiting dental professionals.

The resource allows professionals to search or post job opportunities for dentists, including oral surgeons, orthodontists and other qualified professionals who specialize in dentistry. Visit the ADA CareerCenter at careercenter.ada.org. State and local dental societies may also have job postings. The ADA Success program (ADA.org/successprogram) also offers a program on finding a job, which is available to dental schools.

Staying up to date

The ADA can also help new dentists and dental students stay current on the latest dentistry news as well as scientific findings and studies.

On Sept. 29, the ADA New Dentist Committee launched a redesigned New Dentist Now blog website to help better connect new dentists and dental students to news and insights on the dental profession. It includes several guest bloggers across the country and features articles on topics such as finances, marketing, growing the practice, health and wellness, ethics and continuing education.

The Journal of the American Dental Association and the ADA News are available to members. These publications are available on ADA.org/publications, along with the ADA Dental Product Guide, the ADA Catalog and ADA E-Communications, which includes the ADA Morning Huddle, a daily bulletin of the latest news compiled exclusively for ADA members.

Access CE anytime, anywhere with ADA CE Online. New dentist members can receive a 50 percent discount with promo code 481253. Student members can access free ADA CE Online.
New Dentist Now

Life as a new dentist – let’s talk about it

Want to know more about life as an associate? Curious about a particular GPR program? Check out the blog New Dentist Now.

Brought to you by the New Dentist Committee of the American Dental Association, the blog features resources for new dentists and dental students.

Visit newdentistblog.ADA.org

New Dentist reflects on Institute for Diversity in Leadership

Austin, Texas — As Dr. Ensy Atarod makes the transition from being a “new dentist” to a dentist, she looks back at her time at the ADA Institute for Diversity in Leadership as transformative.

“As a new dentist I knew graduation did not mean the end of learning, but what dental school failed to tell us was as dentists we are involuntarily forced into a role we have no knowledge of: a team leader,” said Dr. Atarod, a 2005 graduate of Creighton University School of Dentistry and a member of the institutes 2010–11 class. “Along with the title of doctor we become automatic role models and leadership is thrust upon us. My participation in the institute was an experience that changed my dental career. It gave me the effective training to be a better leader.”

Dr. Atarod’s leadership project during her year at the Institute was to spur outreach by the Capital Area Dental Society of the greater Austin, Texas, area. She led volunteer dental professionals to 35 elementary schools: “I wanted to provide a program that educated low-income children on both dental health and nutrition and at the same time engage the dentists of our society in a volunteer effort,” she said.

The project led to impressive results: more than 7,770 first- and third-graders were taught about oral health care through Dr. Atarod and her colleagues’ efforts.

“I believe we all need to give back,” Dr. Atarod said. “It is something I learned early on as a core value from my parents, it was taught in Creighton’s dental school and modeled by peers in the Institute. The most important part is to share with others the gift of dental health.”

The institute, founded in 2003, is designed to enhance the leadership skills of dentists who belong to racial, ethnic or gender backgrounds that have been traditionally underrepresented in leadership roles.

“The Institute for Diversity in Leadership gives an opportunity to those who have not traditionally represented the ADA to have a voice to the organized dentistry and bring a unique perspective to the organization,” said Dr. Atarod, a Houston native now working for the St. David’s Foundation, one of the largest school-based charity mobile dental programs in the country. “I know I was inspired and empowered by the program to create change as a leader and make an impact in our community.”

To learn more about the Institute, go to ADA.org and search “Institute for Diversity in Leadership”.

Giving back: Drs. Ensy Atarod and Jeff Dykes give an oral health presentation to Austin students as part of Dr. Atarod’s leadership project.

ADA offers wellness resources for dentists

Whether it’s help with ergonomics in the dental practice, substance abuse prevention or mental health issues, the American Dental Association has a number of wellness resources for dentists.

The Dentist Health and Well-Being Program provides support for ADA members who are in need of information on health and wellness issues.

“As dentists, we’re trained to look out for the well-being and health of our patients,” said Dr. Chris Smith, chair of the Council on Dental Practice’s Dental Wellness Advisory Committee. “But in order to do that effectively, we need to be healthy ourselves. We want our members to know we’re here for them and they have a place to turn to.”

The ADA Center for Professional Success has articles for members on work/life balance, managing stress, ergonomics, addiction, among other topics to help dentists navigate their professional careers. Visit Success.ADA.org and log in with your member ID for more information.

Dentists who need a referral for state well-being committees, specialized treatment facilities or ADA resources for themselves or a colleague can contact Alison Bramhall, ADA manager of dentist health and wellness, at bramhall@ada.org.

All inquiries and referrals are confidential.

Helping new dentists, dental students find success

Continued from front page

For other scientific findings and studies, new dentist and dental student members can access full-text articles online with instant access to over 280 journals through the ADA Library & Archives website. About 95 percent are strictly dental journals. The other 5 percent have medical–dental crossover. This includes in-house access to the New England Journal of Medicine and all the way back to 1812. To access the ADA Library & Archives online, visit ADA.org/library.

Networking and Leadership

Comprising 17 members representing each of the ADA’s regional districts, the New Dentist Committee is a national committee of the ADA Board of Trustees. Its mission: to serve as the voice of the new dentist within the ADA. The committee advises the Board on member benefits and the member experience from a new dentist perspective, on policy affecting new dentists and other matters.

Most state dental societies and several local societies also have new dentist committees. Making personal connections with new dentists in your area is an ideal way to stay connected.

Ethics support

The ADA Ethics Hotline assists new dentists and other members in managing ethical challenges that may arise in day–to–day practice. Callers will be discreetly matched with a member of the Council on Ethics, Bylaws and Judicial Affairs who will arrange a time to discuss the matter and offer resources that may assist in resolution. Call the toll–free number and indicate that you’d like to discuss an ethical matter.

To get involved or for more information, call your state or local dental society, or contact the ADA New Dentist Committee office at newdentist@ada.org or 1–312–440–2386.
Dentists take their skills overseas

With a valuable set of portable skills, dentists are empowered to meet oral health needs all over the world, including countries where dental care access is limited.

The ADA New Dentist News spoke with two dentists who have made international volunteer work part of their lives.

They are Dr. Ellen Thrailkill, a private practice dentist in Pickens, South Carolina, and part-time clinical instructor at Palmetto Health Richland Hospital’s general practice residency program; and Dr. Charlie Clark, a pediatric dentist in Gilbert, Arizona.

Q: Describe where you traveled and how you discovered the opportunity.

Dr. Ellen Thrailkill: I have gone on 12 different mission trips, including to Ecuador, Burundi, Costa Rica, Kenya and Haiti. The Dental Community Fellowship, a local chapter of the Christian Medical & Dental Associations at the Medical University of South Carolina, where I attended school, organized most of the trips. One of the trips to Kenya was organized by a church where I am a member. The number of people on each team varied from eight to 75.

Dr. Charlie Clark: I have joined the Canadian-based Dentistry for All on several mission trips to Guatemala over the past eight years. This first trip for me included 12 volunteers from all over the USA and Canada, many of whom continue to return on clinic trips. We all quickly became friends and each year look forward to the next adventure together.

Q: What were your duties there?

ET: Depending on the trip, I’ve done extractions, restorations (composites and amalgam fillings) and hygiene (cleanings and fluoride).

CC: We all share duties ranging from filling water bottles and changing over chairs to checking patients out and explaining post-operative instructions. Any procedure that would be limited to specialized training in the USA or Canada is also limited to those who have the specific training required. We bring trained dental assistants, hygienists, dentists and specialists to provide an optimal level of care to our communities.

Q: What challenges did you face, including language or cultural differences?

ET: Flight changes, lost baggage, being out of my comfort zone, working with a generator/working without a generator, headlights going dead and adult patients taking clinic tickets from young kids or elderly people are among the challenges I’ve had.

Usually language barriers are kept to a minimum. For non-English speaking countries, interpreters are present and available. Most interpreters are local to the area we are working, so they can help us better understand cultural differences as well.

CC: The organization that I worked with, Dentistry for All, has had a long-standing relationship with the communities where we work. This enables us to partner with local leaders and community workers to facilitate communication.

Still, preparing for a trip abroad can be daunting. Fundraising, gathering supplies and managing time away from family and the office can feel overwhelming.

Q: What advice do you have for dentists considering international volunteering?

ET: Just go! You may want to look into volunteering at a local free clinic in your area, if you’re not already. If you want to get involved in international dental service but can’t go on a trip, you may consider helping fund a dental student’s trip so he/she can go. I wouldn’t have been able to go if it weren’t for generous donors.

CC: Do it! It will change your life. As dentists we have all been fortunate to receive specialized training that allows us to provide care that can truly change another person’s life. Our group saying is “Change a Smile: Change a Life!”

The ADA Foundation can help dentists find a volunteer trip that suits their interests. Visit InternationalVolunteer.ADA.org to search for opportunities by program type, country served, organization name or religious affiliation.
I'm against watching the news. Other people can watch the news all they want to. That's fine. I just don't want to watch it myself.

I don't want to watch the news because buried in every news reel is a sad story. A story that reminds me I'm not invincible, I live in an imperfect world and that sometimes bad things happen that I cannot control.

And unfortunately, regardless of whether or not you watch the news . . . sometimes a sad story still finds you.

In dental school, you rotate through many clinics. You meet a lot of faculty and a lot of patients and a lot of staff. And what's nice about all this is that the conversations aren't always about what X-rays you want to take or whether or not you've made the right diagnosis. Sometimes you talk about your weekend or what you plan to do once you graduate or how good the new restaurant in town is. You form this unique bond with all these different people, and it eventually creates this special thing with its own label.

The other night, a good friend sent me a message that told a sad story. Someone from my dental school had just lost her battle with cancer. Her name was Tiffani. A dental assistant that I, along with everyone else in my class, had weekly interactions with.

Tiffani was more than a name or a dental assistant. She was a friend, a wife, a mother, a person with thoughts and wants and emotions and ambitions. She talked to some of us like she had known us for years. She helped some of us get patients with MS, where she was living with cancer. All while I was still in school. There were conversations I'm sure that we had, where she was living with this horrible disease . . . and I did not know.

Buried in every news reel is a sad story. But what I'm learning is that burial in every sad story is a truth that I need to know. Because me and you and everyone we know are all the same.

Because me and you and everyone we know are all the same. Is that buried in every sad story is a truth that I need to know. Buried in every news reel is a sad story. But what I'm learning is that burial in every sad story is a truth that I need to know. Because you never really know what another person might be going through.

Dr. Joe Vaughn is a New Dentist Now guest blogger. He grew up in Alabama and recently graduated from The University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Dentistry in 2015. He now lives in Seattle, where he attends the General Practice Residency at the University of Washington. For more guest blogger articles, visit newdentistblog.ADA.org.

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