CALL TO ORDER

The virtual meeting of the Council on Communications was called to order by chair, Dr. Sam Mansour, Thursday, March 11, 2021, at 6:05 PM CT.

ROLL CALL

Council members present: Dr. Sam Mansour, chair; Dr. Rebecca De La Rosa, vice chair; Dr. Carol A. Baker; Dr. Wade M. Banner; Dr. Ann Hammi Blue; Dr. Lynse J. Briney; Dr. Michael J. Frankman; Dr. Prabha Krishnan; Dr. Thomas J. Lambert; Dr. Amber P. Lawson; Dr. Mark A. Limosani; Dr. Angela P. Noguera; Dr. Stephen M. Pilmot; Dr. Rhett E. Raum; Dr. Laura Schott; Dr. Jil Shelton Wagers; Dr. Stephanie B. Weaver; Dr. Kevin Kai, New Dentist Committee.

In addition, Dr. Susan Doroshow, liaison, ADA Board of Trustees, and Ms. Callista Schulenburg, consultant, American Student Dental Association, were in attendance.

Council and other staff: Ms. Julia Nissim, director, Council on Communications; Ms. Ivy Woods, coordinator, Integrated Marketing and Communications; Ms. Yvonne Lewis, manager, Business and Administrative Services; Ms. Stephanie Moritz, chief marketing and communications officer; Ms. Pamela Von Lehmden, senior director, Integrated Marketing, Brand Strategy & Innovation; Ms. Leslee Williams, senior director, Communications; Ms. Jenn Sutherland, senior director, Digital Marketing; Mr. Steven Horne, senior manager, Marketing Research; Ms. Samara Schwartz, ADA associate general counsel.

Other ADA officers and staff in attendance for parts of the meeting included: Dr. Kathleen O’Loughlin, ADA executive director; Dr. Daniel J. Klemmedson, ADA President; Dr. Cesar Sabates, ADA President-elect; Ms. Cathy Albrecht, ADA senior associate general counsel; Dr. Marko Vujicic, chief economist, vice president ADA Health Policy Institute; Ms. Chelsea Fosse, senior Health Policy Analyst; Mr. Chad Olson, ADA director, State Government Affairs; Dr. Betsy Shapiro, senior director, Center for Dental Practice Policy; Ms. Nicole Stephani, manager, Social Strategy and Engagement, and Ms. Natalie Matthews, senior manager, Communications.

PRELIMINARY

Adoption of the Agenda: The agenda was adopted with the stipulation that the chair may alter the order of the agenda when necessary to expedite Council business.

Recording of Mail Ballot Actions: It was reported that the minutes of the August 14, 2020 meeting, which were approved via electronic ballot on September 28, 2020, would be recorded in the Council’s minutes in accordance with the Standing Rules for Councils and Commissions. Dr. Mansour noted that a technical error, omission of the word “fluoridation”, was noted after the minutes had been approved. Per the chair’s request, with no objection from the Council, staff will add the word “fluoridation” to the minutes.

Opening remarks: Remarks were made by the Council chair, Dr. Sam Mansour; ADA President, Dr. Daniel Klemmedson; ADA President-elect, Dr. Cesar Sabates; Board of Trustees Liaison, Dr. Susan Doroshow; Chief Marketing and Communications Officer, Ms. Stephanie Moritz; and Council director, Ms. Julia Nissim.
COUNCIL PURPOSE-DRIVEN PRIORITIES

Dr. Sam Mansour highlighted the Council’s purpose-driven priorities, which were developed as a result of discussions that took place during the November 2019 Strategic Planning meeting and 2019-2020 Council meetings. These priorities serve as a guidepost to help keep the Council focused on efforts that ladder up to the ADA’s mission and overall strategic plan.

COUNCIL WORKGROUP UPDATES

Each of the six Council Workgroup chairs provided updates on the work that has been completed by the respective workgroups in support of the objectives in Common Ground 2025.

Membership Goal (The ADA will have sufficient members to be the premier voice for oral health.)

Digital Member Experience (DMX) Workgroup: Dr. Angela Noguera, chair; Dr. Prabha Krishnan, vice chair; Dr. Lynse Briney; Dr. Stephen Pitmon; Dr. Laura Schott; Dr. Carol Baker; Ms. Jenn Sutherland (staff liaison)

Dr. Noguera presented the report of the Workgroup. She explained that the Workgroup provides feedback on milestones in the development of the new ADA.org user experience. She advised that in support of the content migration efforts and to help improve search engine optimization for the new website, the Workgroup conducted a search experience on key topics to better understand how dentists search for information online and what types of responses are received. The Workgroup found that ADA.org returned results for many of the searches completed, and highlighted opportunities to improve future search results. The goal is to have ADA.org show up as the main source of information online, providing user-friendly, concise content that dentists can easily digest and share with their dental team members.

Ms. Jenn Sutherland, senior director, Digital Transformation, reported that the first phase of the technical site development has been completed and is ready for content migration, moving the highest-performing and most valuable content into the new site. The new ADA.org is scheduled to launch in Q4 2021 (November).

Integrated Marketing Workgroup: Dr. Amber Lawson, chair; Dr. Thomas Lambert, vice chair; Dr. Prabha Krishnan; Dr. Angela Noguera; Dr. Wade Banner; Dr. Laura Schott; Dr. Kevin Kai; Ms. Pamela Von Lehmden (staff liaison)

Dr. Lawson, who presented the report of the Workgroup, explained that the purpose of the Workgroup is to provide strategic guidance for the ADA’s integrated marketing campaigns and that the Workgroup is currently focusing on finding ways to gain attention in lagging segments and convert them to members. In Q1, the group developed an Engagement Strategy Tool, which highlights issues within each identified segment and allows for evaluation and development of a measurable, strategic action plan to target these issues. The Workgroup evaluated the segment of non-renew members and provided strategic input on targeted member messaging.

Additionally, to ensure consistent and accurate messaging across the ADA, the Workgroup developed a Communications Reporting Tool. With regard to the Council’s own internal use of the Reporting Tool, and to provide a sample for the Council to illustrate how the Reporting Tool can be utilized effectively, the Communications Workgroup used the Reporting Tool as the format for conveying its report and recommendations to the Council regarding Resolution 103-2020.

After discussion, the Council adopted the following resolution:

COC-01-2021. Resolved, that the Council on Communications Reporting Tool be adopted as the primary mechanism for the Council’s internal communications as well as for the Council’s reports on its activities to other ADA councils and other stakeholders as appropriate.

The Council also voiced support for all councils being encouraged to consider using the Reporting Tool, to promote consistent and accurate messaging across the ADA.
Dr. Lawson advised that Q2 priorities for the Workgroup will focus on evaluating the lagging segment of Early Career Dentists.

Public Goal (The ADA will support the advancement of the health of the public AND the success of the profession.)

**Strategic Communications Plan Workgroup:** Dr. Stephen Pitmon, chair; Dr. Jill Wagers, vice chair; Dr. Amber Lawson; Dr. Ann Hammi Blue; Dr. Mark Limosani; Ms. Callista Schuleenburg; Ms. Sandy Eitel (staff liaison); Ms. Julia Nissim (staff liaison)

On behalf of the Workgroup, Dr. Pitmon shared some key insights from the 2020 Communications Trend Report, which was released in October 2020. He highlighted how the ADA’s focused attention on COVID-19 support was a key contributor to an increase in member satisfaction and the ADA’s Net Promoter score this past year. He recommended that the ADA apply a similarly focused effort on other critical topics that were identified in the report, such as third party payer issues.

Mr. Steve Horne assisted Dr. Pitmon in leading a Council discussion about the professional and consumer surveys that will provide the foundation for the 2021 Communications Trend Report. Topics include emerging issues as well as communications gaps between the ADA and members, and the ADA and the public. Mr. Horne also explained that the surveys will repeat questions on how the ADA is supporting the profession in order to track the ADA’s progress on these issues over time. Results from the surveys will be published in the forthcoming 2021 Communications Trend Report, planned for August 2021.

The Workgroup’s priority for the remainder of the year will be to oversee the development of the 2021 Communications Trend Report.

**Volunteer Engagement Program (VEP) / ADA Spokesperson Review Workgroup:** Dr. Thomas Lambert, chair; Dr. Michael Frankman, vice chair; Dr. Rhett Raum; Dr. Wade Banner; Dr. Ann Hammi Blue; Dr. Kevin Kai; Ms. Callista Schuleenburg; Ms. Julia Nissim (staff liaison); Ms. Nicole Stephani (staff liaison); Ms. Natalie Matthews (staff liaison)

Dr. Lambert presented the Workgroup’s report. He explained that the Workgroup brings together ADA supporters engaged in closed, dentist-only social media groups to create a community of information-sharing and best practices. Additionally, the Workgroup collaborates with staff to vet candidates for the ADA Spokesperson program.

Dr. Lambert reported that prior to the Council meeting, the Workgroup was provided with information concerning four new candidates and one existing candidate (transitioning from an Expert to Consumer Advisor role) and approved moving the candidates forward to the audition phase.

The Workgroup is also looking to re-launch the VEP Basecamp community, which is comprised of dentist leaders who participate in social media platforms. Dr. Lambert advised that the Workgroup has been working to identify individuals to report topics of interest in the Basecamp community and also proactively identify reputation management risks and opportunities. As trending topics are presented to the ADA, the Workgroup will prepare resources for member dentists to use as needed. He noted that it is crucial for members to communicate information back to staff from social media.

**Communications Workgroup:** Dr. Stephanie Weaver, chair; Dr. Lynse Briney, vice chair; Dr. Michael Frankman; Dr. Jill Wagers; Dr. Mark Limosani; Dr. Carol Baker; Ms. Leslee Williams (staff liaison)

Dr. Weaver presented the Workgroup’s report. She explained that the purpose of the Workgroup is to provide strategic guidance on the ADA’s reputation, including the Oral Health is Health (OHIH) campaign, which targets DC-based national opinion leaders such as legislators and staff, media and health influencers. She advised that the Workgroup’s priorities for 2021 are to continue the OHIH Campaign with approved topics and to draft the Council’s response to Resolution 103-2020.

Dr. Weaver noted that the OHIH Campaign was previously managed by an outside agency, but is now managed in-house. The Campaign has achieved significant success, with its effectiveness being measured by impressions and engagements. Despite spending only 15% of the previous agency budget, over a recent three-month period, the campaign has seen 85% engagement results.
Dr. Weaver explained that the Council chair has tasked the Workgroup with drafting for the Council’s consideration a response to Resolution 103-2020, which was referred on the consent calendar to the Council from the 2020 House of Delegates. Utilizing the Reporting Tool, which was developed by the Integrated Marketing Workgroup, Dr. Weaver reported the Workgroup’s draft recommendations based on a survey that the Workgroup conducted of all councils. She advised that the survey results demonstrated that the Liaison Program—which had been mentioned explicitly in Resolution 103—was the lowest ranked of five options offered in the survey. The Workgroup, therefore, believes other options in place of the liaison program are more viable.

Following discussion and review of the Workgroup’s recommendations, the Council adopted the following resolution:

**COC-02-2021. Resolved**, that the recommendations submitted by the Communications workgroup in response to Resolution 103-2020 be approved, and be it further

**Resolved**, that the workgroup’s recommendations be shared with the appropriate ADA staff and agencies to further explore the feasibility of implementing these recommendations; and be it further

**Resolved**, that such ADA staff and agencies be asked to report back to the Council by June 18, 2021 so that the information may be included in the Council’s response to Resolution 103-2020 to the 2021 House of Delegates.

**State Public Affairs (SPA):** Dr. Rhett Raum, Council on Communications representative; Mr. Chad Olson (staff liaison); Ms. Katherine Merullo (staff liaison)

Dr. Rhett Raum, along with Mr. Chad Olson, provided an update on the State Public Affairs (SPA) Program Oversight Workgroup. After fourteen years of operation, SPA continues to support state dental societies dealing with: Action for Dental Health; Native American initiatives (includes the development of the first 10-year oral health program for the Navajo nation); Third Party Payer issues with "FIIST" Fight Insurance Interference Strategic Task Force; and workforce scope of practice issues. Dr. Raum indicated that the SPA program currently provides grants to thirty-six state dental societies to support this spectrum of advocacy efforts. The SPA Workgroup continues to support the advocacy efforts of state dental societies who are facing workforce challenges. No states in 2020 passed laws allowing dental therapists or dental health aide therapists, but Florida, Indiana, New Jersey, New York, Oregon and Washington have had dental therapy legislation introduced. Twelve states have laws authorizing dental therapy, but there is no uniform approach. Dr. Raum advised that the Workgroup will also assist state dental societies working with oral health coalition members in their states who apply for federal Action for Dental Health grants.

Dr. Raum also noted that the National Conference of Insurance Legislators (NCOIL) adopted a Transparency in Dental Benefits Contracting Model Act in December 2020 that includes provisions on provider network leasing, prior authorizations, and virtual credit cards; all are important issues for most member dentists struggling with dental insurance issues.

**HEALTH POLICY INSTITUTE**
**INNOVATIVE RESEARCH**

Dr. Marko Vujicic, ADA Chief Economist, Health Policy Institute, and Dr. Chelsea Fosse, Senior Health Policy Analyst, Health Policy Institute, provided an overview of the data and trends that have helped to guide the ADA’s strategic planning and initiatives and which are connected to the Council’s 2020 Communications Trend Report. (The Communications Trend Report was created to surface and examine reputation management issues that may pose risks to the Association.) Dr. Vujicic advised that HPI’s research focused on dentistry’s journey through COVID-19 and beyond, looking at how the dental sector is transforming.

Dr. Fosse highlighted a few key takeaways from the update:

- Regarding COVID-19 recovery and renewal, there has been a slight increase in patient volume, with private practices at 81% of pre-COVID-19 levels, and volume in the public health setting at 69% of pre-COVID-19 levels as of February 15, 2021.
Dentists are making necessary adjustments and taking various measures to maintain financial sustainability. Over the past month, the most common measure was raising fees.

Approximately 10% of Medicaid dental providers have dis-enrolled from state programs since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Consumer confidence in returning to the dental office hit a new high, with 90% of typical dental patients indicating they are ready to go back or have already gone back.

Dr. Vujicic advised that a slight increase in patient flow is expected in the coming months without many long term impacts.

Dr. Vujicic highlighted three major trends that will help to shape the Association’s strategic plan for the future and noted that in terms of practice patterns, growth in large group practices is on the rise:

- Demographic trends in the workforce, intensified consumerism, and technology innovations are changing dental care utilization patterns and what people expect from their interactions with the dental team.
- The senior patient base is growing. The adult patient base is shrinking. The uninsured, self-pay market is disappearing, declining by 17% the past decade while the overall patient base grew by 4%.
- The dentist practice model is shifting. Large group practice is growing, DSOs are growing, and this is likely to accelerate. This shift in practice modality has important implications, as more and more dentists become employees.

The Council discussed the data presented. Specific questions arose regarding dental insurance, and Ms. Von Lehmden shared some additional context via slides related to third party payer insights and the ADA member value proposition, which helps to turn feedback shared by the profession into a strategic plan of action for the Association.

COUNCIL ON COMMUNICATIONS
TRENDING TOPICS AMONG DISTRICTS

The Council shared common topics and emerging issues from each of their districts, which included membership, licensure, and receiving and administering the COVID-19 vaccine. This discussion will help set the stage for thinking strategically and considering how these trends may relate to Council efforts in 2021.

ADA COUNCIL GUEST CHAIR REMARKS

Guest chairs from other ADA councils presented and discussed updates on their respective councils’ main purpose-driven priorities for 2021. The following councils were represented:

- Council on Advocacy for Access and Prevention, Dr. Jessica Meeske, chair
- Council on Dental Benefits Programs, Dr. Randall Markarian, chair
- Council on Dental Exams and Licensure, Dr. Jacqueline Plemons, chair
- Council on Dental Practice, Dr. Duke Ho, chair
- Council on Government Affairs, Dr. David White, vice chair
- Council on Membership, Dr. Jeff Kahl, chair

ADA UPDATE

Dr. O’Loughlin spoke about how COVID-19 affected the ADA’s membership numbers and financials. Additionally, she discussed the ADA’s core values, especially diversity and inclusion. She reviewed the ADA’s strategic plan, including the public goal. Dr. O’Loughlin also emphasized that the ADA’s business continuity plan ensured that the organization’s work was able to continue during the pandemic, and that such plans should be part of preparing for future pandemics.

LEGAL UPDATE

Mr. Scott Fowkes, Esq., ADA General Counsel, presented an informational update on legal issues relating to dentistry.

COUNCIL ON ACCESS, ADVOCACY & PREVENTION
Dr. Jessica Meeske, chair, Council on Advocacy for Access and Prevention (CAAP), provided an update on the Health Equity resolution proposed by the council at their January meeting. CAAP is identifying Health Equity as a policy issue for consideration by the House of Delegates and has reached out to ADA leadership and other councils for input. CAAP is also focusing on a framework for Medicaid reform to expand access to care and reduce visits by patients to hospital emergency departments as part of Action for Dental Health.

Dr. Meeske shared that several health equity webinars are upcoming and that Council members are welcome to attend.

EMERGING TRENDS AND REPUTATION MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION

Ms. Leslee Williams, Senior Director, Communications, and Mr. Steve Horne, Senior Manager, Marketing Research, facilitated a discussion regarding ADA core values and emerging issues. The discussion centered on whether, from a membership and ADA reputation management perspective, current and future/prospective ADA members want the ADA to take a stand and make public statements on issues not necessarily directly connected to dentistry or health. A few examples were shared based on current events to help seed the discussion. The Council’s discussion will help shape further research with dentists to be conducted later this year.

NEW DENTIST COMMITTEE (NDC)

Dr. Kevin Kai, New Dentist Committee, provided an update on NDC current activities. He advised that the current focus of the NDC is on membership growth, the needs of associate dentists, and social media engagement strategies (social media heroes and engaging new dentists on VEP). The “ADA 10 Under 10” Awards are still being spearheaded by the NDC, but involvement has been down due to COVID-19. There were over 100 submissions; however, this is a decrease when compared with 200 submissions in 2020. The 10 Under 10 Award honors dentistry’s rising stars: dentists who are making an impact on the profession less than 10 years after graduating from dental school.

The Council engaged in discussion regarding social media engagement strategies and cross collaboration between the Council and the NDC.

AMERICAN STUDENT DENTAL ASSOCIATION (ASDA)

Ms. Callista Schulenburg, consultant, American Student Dental Association, shared an update on ASDA membership and current national initiatives. ASDA focuses its efforts on involving students in organized dentistry while they are still in dental school, and showing them firsthand how they have the power to guide their profession. Ms. Schulenburg advised that for the 2019-20 term, there were 23,079 members and 66 chapters, with 46 chapters auto-billed. The 2020-21 ASDA Board of Trustees appointed new national ASDA leaders for councils, committees and editorial boards, whose term began at the February 19-21, 2021 virtual annual session. ASDA has developed a licensure taskforce that established a grassroots initiative to keep licensure reform momentum moving on a state level and to ensure a liaison to advocate for ongoing licensure reform. Upcoming national meetings include the April 24-25, 2021 Virtual Spring Council and Board of Trustees meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

No new business was proposed for consideration.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council on Communications adjourned its meeting at 11:50 AM CDT on March 13.