ADA News
AMERICAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION WWW.ADA.ORG
OCTOBER 19, 2015 VOLUME 46 NO.19

ADA-developed standards help protect dentists, ensure safety of patients

BY MICHELLE MANCHIR

Teams of Association volunteers and staff work diligently to ensure one often-overlooked ADA member benefit: the development of dental standards.

The ADA Center for Informatics and Standards/Practice address dentists' concerns about things like the safety and efficacy of chairs, restorative fillings and radiographic systems and software.

In September, the ADA published the first-ever dental computer-aided design/computer-aided manufacturing (CAD/CAM) standards, thanks to this group's work.

The ADA is the exclusive developer of U.S. dental standards approved by the American National Standards Institute and participates in international standards development as Secretariat of the U.S. Technical Advisory Group to the International Organization for Standardization's Technical Committee No. 106 on Dentistry.

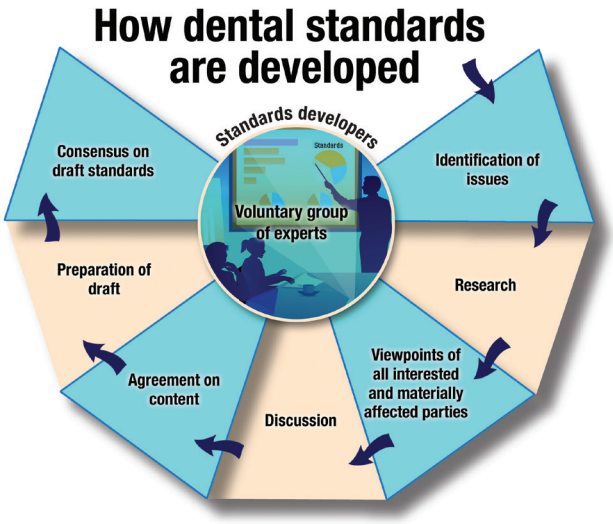
Simply put, that means the ADA has dentists' backs when it comes to seeing that dental standards protect dentists and their patients, said Dr. Jeffrey Platt, an associate professor of dental materials and interim chair of the Department of Biomedical and Applied Sciences at the Indiana University School of Dentistry. He is also vice chair of the ADA Council on Scientific Affairs, which monitors the development and publishing of dental materials standards.

Dr. Platt

Dr. Park

More than 600 volunteers from dentistry, industry, academia and government work together to build these standards with the guidance of ADA staff. "Those involved with the development of standards at the ADA are the unsung heroes of dentistry," said ADA President Maxine Feinberg. "The work they do is an important member benefit that helps us provide our patients with quality dental care and have confidence in the systems that are in place."

In 2000, ANSI accredited the ADA as the developer of dental standards in the U.S. But the ADA has contributed to dental standards development since 1928 when the federal government asked the ADA to develop the first standard on dental amalgam.



Developing and publishing dental standards is an intensive and detailed process. It involves getting input from many volunteer stakeholders in ADA standards committee working groups including designers, academics and manufacturers of dental products and also the ADA member dentists who use them. ADA standards committees analyze and establish baseline standards and technical recommendations for nearly all of the materials, equipment and instruments used in today's dental practice.

The ADA News publishes calls for comments on proposed standards and also on technical reports, which provide information on new products and technologies. Anyone with an interest is able to review and submit comments on the proposed documents. The working group — a collaboration of dentists, academicians, dental product manufacturers and other interested subject experts who develop proposed standards — considers the comments for potential revisions to the proposed standard, then forwards the completed draft for approval to an affiliated ADA council and standards committee.

Standards are reviewed every five to seven years, Dr. Platt said, to keep up with changing and emerging technologies. Sometimes technology calls for completely new standards.

In September, for example, the ADA Standards Committee on Dental Products approved new standards to help the growing number of dental CAD/CAM users be confident that the many providers of such systems are providing products that are safe and effective for patient care.

Dr. Jacob Park, chair of ADA Standards Committee on Dental Products Subcommittee on CAD/CAM in Dentistry and a professor of dentistry/clinical at the University of Texas Health Science Center School of Dentistry, said the CAD/CAM standards demonstrate the importance of the development of dental standards. Decades ago, he said, one or two CAD/CAM systems were on the market, so dentists didn't have to wonder which would be safe and effective. Today, he estimates more than 200 companies sell CAD/CAM-related products and systems worldwide.

"Without the standards, we don't know whether the manufacturer's claims are accurate. Once we have standards and the manufacturers follow them, then the standards will help protect the dentists, the lab technicians and the patients," Dr. Park said.

For more information about the ADA's development of standards or to get involved in their development, visit ADA.org/dentalstandards, or email standards@ada.org. ■

What are dental standards?

Documents that:

- Define or provide specific technical requirements for a material, product, process, procedure, service, policy, etc.
- Provide definitions dimensions, terminology, symbols, test methods, performance or safety requirements, etc.
- Are clear, concise, unambiguous and easily understood by those not involved in its development.
- Facilitate the improvement and quality of oral health and the safety of dental care.

How can you get involved in the development of dental standards?

- Pay attention to the ADA News when it publishes lists of new standards or technical reports available for comment.
- Find one that relates to your interests or expertise.
- Review the report or standard.
- Submit comments and questions to standards@ada.org.
- Contact the Department of Standards at the ADA and join a committee related to your interests or expertise.

You can read standards developed so far in 2015 online by visiting ADA.org and searching for the headline, "New Dental Standards Developed in 2015." ■