

JOURNAL

Quarter 1, 2022

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Association







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Quarter 1, 2022

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Our Roots Run Deep with Hawaii Dentists



Diane S.L. Paloma, PhD
President & CEO
Hawaii Dental Service

Aloha!

It is an honor to join Hawaii Dental Service (HDS) and continue serving in the healthcare industry. Dentistry is such a fascinating field and my appreciation for your partnership with HDS grows as I learn of the level of care and guidance you provide to our members. I look forward to strengthening our partnership through meeting and collaborating with you all in the coming months.

I invite you to join HDS in commemorating its 60th year of healthy smiles and local roots. Our organization's history began with the passion and commitment of 15 local dentists who cared for children and their families who did not have access to quality dental care in our islands. HDS continues to build upon that mission by creating a lifetime of healthy smiles for families across Hawaii, Guam and Saipan through better dental plans and increased access to your services.

Thank you for your partnership, passion and commitment to healthier smiles for our island communities. I look forward in working with you all to create a healthier, stronger and more resilient future for Hawaii.

Mahalo,
Diane



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HDA President
Scott Kanamori, DDS

From the President

Aloha my esteemed colleagues, mentors and friends, I am honored to be elected your next president. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Past President Dr. Pasty Fujimoto, council and trustee members, and our Executive Director Ms. Kim Nguyen, for all their work this past year.

To share a little about myself, I am a general dentist living and working on the island of Maui. I graduated from Creighton University School of Dentistry in 2008 and joined my father, Dr. Ted Kanamori in his practice. Aside from dentistry, what brings me the most joy day-to-day is my better half Krystine and her daughter Naiya, and any opportunity to surf. Like many householders, we found being schoolteachers on top of being parents incredibly challenging.



Thank you for caring about our profession and joining together in a unified voice to advocate for the highest level of patient care, and resist influences that would erode our ability to be effective clinicians.

The COVID-19 pandemic reminded us that there will always be things out of our control. It has changed the “how” we get work done, in our practices, in our association and our homes, but not the “why.”

Why do you do what you do? Why are we here? The answer that comes to me are shared values. I marvel at each one’s commitment to your patients, family, and community. Thank you for caring about our profession and joining together in a unified voice to advocate for the highest level of patient care, and resist influences that would erode our ability to be effective clinicians.

For me, HDA has been about a sense of connection. I feel so blessed to have a lifelong HDA member as a father, who allowed me to join his practice and introduced me to his friends who were involved in organized dentistry. They shared so much; and I am better because of it. Like them, you all inspire me. As president, I ask you to continue to be beacons of inspiration. Please, be generous with your words of encouragement, please share your knowledge and experience. I promise to do the same.

Each time we are faced with new challenges in the future, I believe we will always work together.

If you find yourself in need, or if you would like to get involved and haven’t done so before, please reach out. I can be reached at the HDA office. 🦷



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HDA Executive Director
Kim Nguyen, MSW

From the Executive Director

By the time you read this, the saying “Happy New Year” seems so long ago, especially since first quarter of 2022 will be coming to a close then. Nevertheless, our team here at HDA hopes that you’re off to a strong and productive start.

- HDA resumed our in-person CE event, our first since before the pandemic! On January 27, we hosted over 450 attendees for three CE courses and 24 exhibitors. While much smaller than our typical convention, the CE event allowed us to dip our toes into “getting back to normal.” We were very excited to see everyone face to face (albeit masked up). Read more about it in this *Journal* and mark your calendars for upcoming CE courses (April 7, July 14, and October 6).
- The 2022 Legislative Session kicked off this quarter (January 19) and our legislative team has their hands full with several dental-related bills. You can read the details later on in this

Journal, but although session was in full swing, public participation is still via virtual and streaming means.

- We recognize that some of our members did not renew in time. While we do not know what happened exactly, we are asking that any affected members directly contact the Professional and Vocational Licensing (PVL) department at 808.586.3000 to inquire about, and begin, the “restoration” process, or email the BOD at dental@dcca.hawaii.gov. Going forward, HDA will push out more frequent reminders as that renewal time nears.
- Our many HDA programs—from the Building program to Membership Engagement—have much to do this year, with a new strategic plan, and with reinvigorated ideas and plans. Watch for those in upcoming emails, *Journals*, and communications.

Whatever the year has in store for us, please be sure you are part of the journey. Renew your dues if you have not; let us know of your interest area so we can slot you into an existing workgroup; or be sure to attend an upcoming (CE) event and/or your county meetings. We hope to see you soon! 🦷

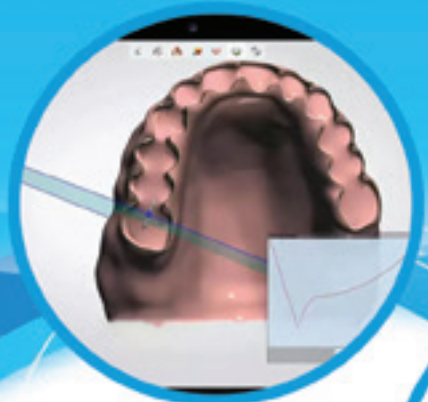


Whatever the year has in store for us, please be sure you are part of the journey.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Nguyen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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2022 HDA Meeting Calendar

All HDA Members Welcome at All HDA Meetings

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Board of Trustees 8:30am–1pm via Zoom (unless otherwise noted) Thursday <i>May 12, 2022</i> <i>July 7, 2022</i> <i>September 29, 2022</i></p> | <p>Executive Council 6:30– approx 8:30pm via Zoom (unless otherwise noted) Wednesday <i>March 16, 2022</i> <i>April 6, 2022 (as necessary)</i> <i>April 27, 2022</i> <i>June 22, 2022</i> <i>August 10, 2022</i> <i>October 26, 2022</i></p> | <p>House of Delegates (HOD) Sunday, November 20, 2022 HOD Reference Task Force (RTF) TBD </p> |
|--|---|--|

Conferences & Events

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>ADA Presidents-Elect, Management, and Membership Conferences: TBD</p> <p>Western States Presidents Conference <i>July 28–30, Seward, AK</i></p> <p>ADA 14th District Caucus I <i>August 26–28, Denver, CO</i></p> | <p>ADA New Dentists Conference: TBD</p> <p>ADA “SmileCon” Annual Session and House of Delegates <i>October 13–17, Houston, TX</i></p> |
|---|--|

Dates/times subject to change. Please call to confirm attendance. If you would like to add your event, please contact the HDA office.



E Komo Mai! New Members

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Arya Dadashzadeh, DDS | Favio Gallegos, DDS | Jaydene McDaniel, DMD | Valerie Velasco, DDS |
| Jun de los Reyes, DDS | Jessica Gasser, DMD | Heidi Roberts, DDS | Berton Wong, DDS |
| Nicole Endo, DDS | Miles Katahara, DDS | Lloyd Sahara, DDS | |
| Nicole Fernandez, DMD | Jonathan Lau, DDS | Susan Shiroma, DDS | |
| Keileen Fukada, DDS | Alex Matsumoto, DMD | Kurt Uyehara, DDS | |



In Memoriam

- | | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Todd Fukuda, DMD | Harry Masaki, DDS | Randall Morita, DDS | Conrad Theiss, DMD |
|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|

Your Foundation's Activities

By Dr. Gary Yonemoto, Foundation President

Happy New Year and Gung Hee Fat Choy! This is a tiger year and like a tiger, the Hawaii Dental Association Foundation (HDAF), plans to go “roaring” into 2022 with activities and growth.

First, let me thank all of you who donated to the HDAF with your dues. Your generosity and commitment to improving Hawaii's oral health is much appreciated. Although COVID is waning, it is still with us. However, many of us are optimistic that the worst is behind us and that all of us will see our offices return to the “new” normal. One thing is for certain, many people have delayed their oral hygiene needs and hopefully this is the year that they now feel comfortable going to the dentist.



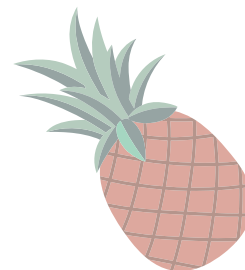
The activities we have planned for 2022 are geared toward our mission statement, “To help improve the oral health of our community.” Unfortunately, we will not have an in-person “Give Kids A Smile” (GKAS) clinic or school visitations this year. Now the good news, we are busy developing an animated GKAS video. We hope to partner with the DOE and have the video distributed statewide to all schools for use as part of their curriculum.

We are still planning on having a GKAS Gala/Fundraiser on October 1, 2022. The theme is the “Roaring 20's, The Great Gatsby.” As with our last GALA several years ago, there will be a whiskey wine wall and a silent auction. All of you who have attended our past GALAs know that “*they are fun.*” Please consider attending and making a donation to the whiskey wine wall and to silent auction. I hope to see you there.

The HDAF is still actively accepting grant applications. We have two grant deadlines, May 1 and November 1. If you know of a 501c3 organization that is planning an activity involving oral health or oral health education, encourage them to apply. Our grant applications can be downloaded from our website.

The HDAF welcomed a neighbor island board member from Maui, Dr. Neil Nunokawa. Our goal is to truly be a “statewide” foundation. Maui has already started some GKAS activities, but COVID has hampered their progress. We expect this to change in 2022. We are still looking for a board representative from the Big Island and Kauai. Please let us know if you are interested.

Please visit our website, www.hawaiidentalassociation.org, to learn more about the Foundation and “Get involved.” 🦷



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Touchdown!

By Dr. Nora Harmsen, HDA Dental Education Program Member

It was the Saturday night before the Super Bowl and I was thinking about our recent one-day CE convention. Our trusty coach, Dr. Jackie Lum, and manager, Ms. Kim Nguyen, had guided us through the entire year of 2021, with multiple game plan changes to score an in-person January 27, 2022 Convention.

During the first quarter of 2021, they didn't know if we could do anything at all, but called for the Zoom play during the second quarter. Mid-game, the officials changed the COVID rules with governor and mayor mandates, social distancing and lots of tense moments with the Education Committee trying to send the right plays in.

By the third quarter, the stadium insisted on our rent, and we played into the fourth quarter, hoping for the best. It was a chance to redeem ourselves from a very tough 2021 season, filled with COVID and Zoom fatigue. The fourth quarter brought our special

teams, nicknamed "The Vendors," who were willing to make a small table and a table cloth into an experience for all to talk about as part of the fourth quarter rally.

Leading up to our Super Bowl CE meeting, we were struck with unexpected growth in attendees, so we opened up more seats in the stadium, AKA the Hawaii Convention Center, and utilized the fourth floor for our home team section. The pre-game program had smooth lines of temperature taking and COVID checks and once free in the stadium, the attendees, now 443, were winding their way into their seats.

On game day, Dr. Ed Cassella returned the kickoff with a runback that put us in good position to start the game. His run featured a focus on periodontics. TDIC, our team sponsor graciously donated \$10,000 for the game and brought in our starting quarterback, Mr. Art Curley. His dazzling audibles prior to, and after, our half time lunch

break have become highlights on ESPN. His three-hour quarterback draw on ethics was a game changer, as he made sure the team understood the plays through energetic play-calling. But the final quarter belonged to our back-up quarterback, Dr. Sean



Dr. Ed Cassella presented on Periodontics (top). Attendees gained CE credits for in-person courses (bottom).



Holliday, as he called the orthodontic plays that the team could use at their own dental camps.

At the end of the long game, the team had made tough decisions early, executed well throughout, and scored the key touchdown when it counted. The stadium erupted with cheers and applause for Cassella, Curley, and Holliday and for our team sponsor, TDIC, in tribute to another CE *Victory!*

From a stressful year of planning, the Education Committee and Dr. Jackie Lum worked behind the scenes

tirelessly to make the meeting a success. Although it wasn't our largest event, many felt it was a great step in the right direction after the last few years of COVID. There were 24 vendors this year at our meeting and we are thankful for their participation and attendance as well. Many of them have supported the HDA for years.

Looking forward into the year 2022, we will have a Zoom program on April 7, 2022 from 9:00–11:00 am. Dr. Allen Wong, the current President of AADMD, UOP graduate and professor will present “The Joy of Treating Special Healthcare Needs Population.”

According to Dr. Wong in his outline for the presentation: “There is a crisis in the community of those with special healthcare needs. One of the most overlooked populations are those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Among the IDD population, one of the greatest healthcare needs is dental. The disparity of care has led to many emergent situations including death due to infections. This course will discuss the barriers to care and offers helpful ideas and strategies to learn how to safely treat patients without stress. We will discuss the



Participants attended all day courses and visited with each other and exhibitors.

MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS



‘myths’ about treating patients and a triage approach to selecting patients that make your practice rewarding and enriching. An emphasis on prevention with a strong caries risk assessment approach will be reviewed in a useful manner that can help all patients. As a general dentist that works with all ages in the clinic and operating room, I will share lessons learned in my journey as an educator and private practitioner.”

You may say this is a very specific topic, but be advised that the ADA has put out a memo that all dentists be trained and able to help patients with special needs. Also, be reminded that your office must have access for patients with disabilities. This is your opportunity to update you and your office staff with this information

provided by Dr. Wong. We hope you and your staff will attend.

Looking further into 2022, we will have programs currently scheduled for July 14 and October 6. Mark your calendars now and stay tuned for the everchanging updates on in-person

versus Zoom and on our new topics for your continuing education.

Please continue to support the Education Committee and the HDA with your participation in these meetings. This is another benefit of your membership in *your* HDA! 🦷



Top and bottom: More participants attending courses and visiting with each other and exhibitors.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Volunteer Spotlight

By Dr. Carla Fukumoto, HDA Secretary



Dr. Derek Ichimura serves on the HDA Board of Trustees and Dental Education Program.

In this *Journal*, we ask Dr. Derek Ichimura, Honolulu County Trustee on the HDA Board and Member of the Dental Education Program: How do you volunteer for the HDA and why?

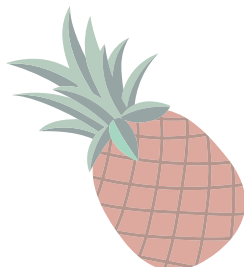
“I volunteer because I think it is a rewarding way to give back to the HDA in a small way. It doesn’t take much time out of one’s life to participate and knowing that the effort helps to make things better for everyone, is gratifying.” 🦷

COUNTY CORNER

Hawaii County Dental Society

By Dr. Lena Hamakawa, County President

Happy 2022! Hawaii County ended 2021 with our PPE distribution in November. The event was organized by HDA’s Executive Director Ms. Kim Nguyen and Projects Coordinator Ms. Rachelle Teruya, and was a success! We also held our annual Christmas Party at the Hilo Yacht Club, that was sponsored by Central Pacific Bank. It was great to have an in-person event for the first time in two years. At the party, we inducted new officers for the County. We are looking forward to a great and productive 2022!



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MEET CAREY LEE, DDSmatch.com

Carey Lee brings more than 20 years of dental industry experience to DDSmatch, most recently as a General Manager for Patterson Dental in Hawaii. Carey will serve the Greater Pacific region, bringing his experience into those local dental markets. He has always made a commitment to placing others first. These principles have enabled Carey to build an extensive network centered around trusted relationships. Carey is a board member with Aloha Medical Mission and Dental Lifeline Network Hawaii. A resident of Milliani, Hawaii, Carey enjoys traveling and experiencing life with his wife and 6 kids. A graduate of the University of Southern California and a native of the Pacific Northwest, Carey is an avid football fanatic, cheering on his hometown teams, the Washington Huskies and the Seattle Seahawks.

About CAREY

Q: What is DDSmatch?

Carey Lee: DDSmatch is a dental transition company that is seller-focused and truly helps “connect the dentist’s present with their future.” As someone who has worked with dentists for more than two decades, I am excited to bring this service - and our vast network that is active in 47 states - to the Greater Pacific region to help meet the needs of the dentists I serve.

Q: What role does DDSmatch play?

CL: DDSmatch handles practice sales, practice mergers, dental partnership agreements, associate placements, dental office appraisals and dental practice real estate sales. We also work with other business professionals like attorneys, accountants and appraisers to ensure the smoothest transition possible.

Q: Why do dentists choose DDSmatch for their practice sale?

CL: I feel that DDSmatch offers clients a transition process that is local, professional, dental-specific, and highly organized. We take the time to listen - to us it’s a transition, not a transaction. We have a nationwide database of potential buyers and associates and we use our “Trusted Transition Process™” to find the right match for the dentist. We also use independent third party valuations conducted by CPAs and Certified Valuation Analysts- we’re one of the few companies to do this - so every dentist knows what their practice is truly worth.

Q: What role do you play in the transition?

CL: Ultimately, I represent the seller, serving as the team leader, guiding each dentist through the process step by step, with their ideal goal in mind. I have cultivated a robust network of referring professionals such as CPAs, bankers, commercial real estate personnel, contractors, and dental attorneys. I coordinate efforts with these professionals on behalf of the seller. In order to have the best transition possible, I can also help the buyer connect with a solid team of professionals of their own. Behind the scenes I’m working to engage potential buyers, in person, and of course, through our searchable website.

Q: What makes you and DDSmatch great at what you do?

CL: I am client focused, and have built an extensive network in the local market. I actively listen to my clients, because I strive to understand the WHY so I can deliver the WHAT and the HOW. When you pair strong communication with DDSmatch and the Trusted Transition Process, tools, and vast database of potential buyers, it creates a great outcome for dentists looking to transition their practices.

Q: What motivates you?

CL: My greatest motivation is knowing that I am providing an exceptional service experience to my clients. As a local transition professional with an established network, I bring the necessary connectivity to my clients in my community. Knowing I am helping them preserve their legacy is all the motivation I need.



Carey Lee
Owner/President
DDSmatch Greater Pacific
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Getting to Know Our New HDA President

Dr. Scott Kanamori

By Dr. Candace Wada, HDA Member

Dr. Scott Kanamori is our newest Hawaii Dental Association president. He will be one of the youngest dentists to step up to the plate and lead our organization. Let's get to know this dedicated young dentist!

Scott went to Creighton University School of Dentistry, graduated in 2008 and started working with his father in private practice in June of that year. Scott said, "Over the years, my father has been a kind and encouraging mentor who guided me through many types of challenges. Having someone there to talk to, bounce ideas off of, and ask questions. Hearing that he made mistakes in the past too and that he is still learning and trying to better himself, has made dentistry more enjoyable for me."

On Maui, it has been just Scott and his immediate family for many years. Scott said, "Since COVID, I feel blessed to have met an amazing partner, Krystine, and her daughter Naiya, who have brought me a great amount of joy. We made many memories during the time of the 'shut down,' sitting on empty beaches, gazing out to a cloudless horizon with nothing but the sound of the ocean. Bliss. Then, my younger brother Gary moved back to Maui with his family; and now I get to be a part-time horse, giving piggy-back rides every chance I get to see my adorable niece, Kammy and nephew, Kyan."

Scott finds restorative dentistry to be his forte—utilizing cast gold

restorations (thanks Dad!) and composite resins with the Bioclear matrices/technique. He also finds endodontics interesting and said, "I'd even consider going back to school for an advanced degree in endodontics in 10 years if they would take a 50 year old CE junkie!" Outside of dentistry Scott enjoys surfing, shooting hoops with Naiya, and anything else she

might be interested in, eating the delicious food that Krystine makes, and being her assistant for her catering gigs—where he gets to taste test everything.

When asked how the COVID-19 pandemic affected his practice, he said, "We shut down during the early stage of COVID from March–June 2020 due to the lack of recommended PPE. We



A young Dr. Scott Kanamori with his Dad, Dr. Ted Kanamori.

had reduced staff, at their request, who stayed home due to concern of the unknown risks. And, we now see less patients to increase time between patients—which decreases patient traffic inside the office and have also added fogging with hypochlorous acid.”

When asked how he came to volunteer to be HDA president, Scott said, “My dad brought me along to Maui County Dental Society meetings, which at the time were held every other month, and I got to meet my fellow colleagues and hear about what they went through in the past in organized dentistry. At the county level, everyone takes a turn rotating through leadership. There were a bunch of other new dentists like me, so we all rotated through around the same time and we had a lot of fun together organizing sponsored events and CE; the highlight was always our annual Christmas party. Many times at Dr. Rasmussen’s house—good food, good fun with colleagues and their families. Dr. Rasmussen was our Maui County Trustee and graciously allowed me to take over for him. After several years on the Board of Trustees, I’ve had the pleasure of learning from many mentors on the board, who also happen to be colleagues I am in study clubs with or we have traveled together for CE or are my father’s close friends, aka my uncles and aunties. So HDA is like extended family.”

Asked what his vision is for the HDA, Scott said, “My vision for HDA is for members to reconnect with each other and provide opportunities for our new dentists to connect with our mid- and late-career dentists—form business relationships, ask questions about clinical dentistry, practice management, and life in general. I am concerned that with

the explosion of online media, we are becoming more reliant on dental forums/websites/YouTube for knowledge and inspiration. In many ways, instant access to information is positive and more productive, but what I fear is lost human-to-human inspiration, to be told it’s okay to not be perfect, have a kind word lift your spirits after you’ve fallen down, and recognize when the person next to you needs that too—then it is your turn to be that beacon.”

As for the issues Scott may need to address in the coming year as HDA president, he has several priorities during his term which include instituting the refreshed Strategic Plan (2022–24),

identifying long-term solutions for the HDA building that will meet our members’ needs, and keeping members engaged. He added, “Coming out of COVID restrictions, I would hope to see in-person meetings and indoor limits dropped so we can plan our normal large scale convention next year. Our traditional annual convention was an excellent opportunity to get together with friends and see/touch new products, see and try out new equipment, and talk with vendors. 2022 will be the year we can try to return, as close as we can, to what we remember as normal.” 🦷



Making a gingerbread house with Krystine and Naiya.

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Ms. Melissa Pavlicek



Mr. Danny Cup Choy

HDA Preps for 2022 Legislative Session

By Ms. Melissa Pavlicek and Mr. Danny Cup Choy, HDA Legislative Consultants

The Impacts of Coalitions

The Hawaii Dental Association (HDA) has often been a singular voice on certain oral health policy issues. And while that has helped build the organization's credibility in the policy making process, legislators like to engage on issues that have broad interest in the community. So while HDA continues to take the lead on important oral health issues where the perspective of dentistry is absolutely essential, such as scope of practice, fluoridation, and patient safety, there are other oral health issues in which the organization plays a supporting advocacy role. Examples of these issues include a sugary beverage tax and tobacco cessation. HDA also

relies on groups like the Hawaii Chamber of Commerce for general business advocacy that affects dentists as employers on issues like minimum wage and paid family leave. This allows HDA to spend the bulk of its time and influence on issues where it has the greatest impact.

As many know, coalition work can be difficult and imperfect, with compromise leaving most feeling like they did not get exactly what they want. When you put a group of people together who all bring their own experiences and expertise to the conversation, forward progress can sometimes be slow. The benefits when it all comes together, are the power of working alongside community stakeholders to ensure better oral health outcomes for the state. At the end of the day, we are all working towards that same goal. HDA has been encouraged by the work of the Hawaii Oral Health Coalition and engaged in its advocacy committee as a way to come together with community stakeholders. There is a multiplier effect when organizations come together in a coalition. HDA sees that in the progress being made in support of funding for adult dental Medicaid coverage.

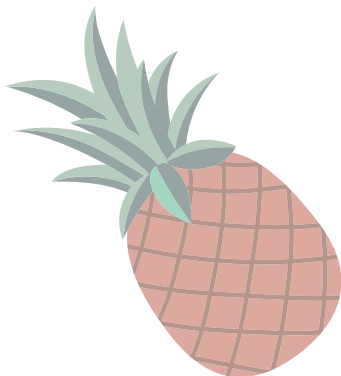


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2022 Legislative Update

There is never a shortage of relevant issues facing the Hawaii Dental Association each legislative session. A House bill that sought to authorize licensure by credentials to practitioners from other states did not receive a hearing and has not advanced. The effort to restore dental benefits for adults on Medicaid has never been stronger, not only through a growing coalition, but the Department of Human Services requesting an appropriation for the restoration in Governor Ige's supplemental budget. With the state experiencing a historic budget surplus, this could be the year those vital services are restored. HDA leadership and your experienced legislative program team are also closely monitoring bills related to telehealth, youth vaping, and allowing dental assistants to perform limited duties under the general supervision of a dentist in public health settings.

HDA continues to advocate at the legislature, Board of Dentistry, and with community stakeholders and coalitions to ensure the voice of dentists are being considered in all important oral health policy decisions. 🦷



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Handle With Care Minimizing Risk With Short-Term and Traveling Patients

By TDIC Risk Management

You likely have invested considerable time and money in a marketing plan that attracts new patients to your office, along with energy and resources to ensure those patients are retained. Building a thriving practice and growing your patient base is even more rewarding when new patients are rereferred to you from satisfied existing patients or other trusted health care providers and peers.

Some of these patients come with baggage—quite literally! A variety of situations can prompt patients who are not local to seek dental care while they are temporarily visiting or residing in your area. Some may have an established provider in their primary residential area but are experiencing an unexpected dental emergency or trauma. Others may be attempting to maintain an established treatment plan or receive preventive care while temporarily living away from their regular dentist. These patients may include:

- Business travelers who are on extended work trips in your city.
- Students at local colleges, universities or boarding schools.
- “Snowbirds” or others who live in one area seasonally then return to their permanent residence for the rest of the year.

As the “emergency” general dentist, you may be handling more difficult procedures but are unable to ensure continuity of care, follow-up treatment and maintenance once the patient leaves your office. An additional complication is that you have not had the opportunity yet to build a climate of trust with this short-term patient—an important step in the

provider-patient relationship that increases communication and improves outcomes. So how can you care for temporary or traveling patients while protecting your practice from elevated risk factors? The Dentists Insurance Company’s dedicated Risk Management analysts provide guidance to inform complex decision-making and help you navigate patient selection and documentation.

A Case Study in Treating an Out-of-Town Patient

A phone call received by TDIC’s Risk Management Advice Line involved a retiree patient who enjoyed spending summers in the milder coastal climate of Northern California but preferred spending the winter months in Arizona. The patient did not disclose this information about her sun-seeking lifestyle to the dentist she saw in California. When she began experiencing tooth pain, the California dentist treated her and placed a provisional crown, advising the patient to return in two weeks for a permanent restoration.

The patient failed to return until months later; by that time, the tissue around the tooth was inflamed and the tooth had developed slight mobility. The dentist advised the patient of the tooth’s guarded prognosis during this second appointment. The patient chose to have the previously fabricated crown placed, but the crown did not fit and needed to be remade. Upon hearing the news that this would extend the treatment time, the patient stated she would soon be leaving town. The treating dentist asked the lab to rush the case so the patient’s treatment could be completed prior to her departure.

A few weeks after the permanent crown had been delivered, the California dentist heard back from the patient, who was now living in Arizona. She reported that the tooth had fractured at the gumline. With the patient living so far away, limiting her return for follow-up care, the dentist sought advice from TDIC’s Advice Line for how to handle the situation ethically and effectively.

The Risk Management analyst advised the dentist on the importance of patient and case selection as well as spending more time with patients during initial visits to gain knowledge about their dental history and lifestyle. Recognizing that the patient’s difficulty with receiving continuity of care from his practice was overlooked in previous visits, the dentist was willing to offer the patient a partial refund to offset the cost of care. The analyst reviewed guidelines for offering the patient a refund and reminded the dentist to encourage the patient to establish care with a dentist in her current location as soon as possible. Such a reminder should be offered in writing to establish a body of evidence.

The Importance of Patient Selection

As much as you want to welcome new patients, remember that dentists are not obligated to accept all patients into their practice (barring discrimination). Those you do select to make up your patient base should generally be those with whom you can form productive, healthy provider-patient relationships. When patients come to you on an as-needed basis and you are not in the position to perform routine exams or radiographs,

it is difficult for you to ensure continuity of care, proper diagnoses, treatment and maintenance—all factors that increase risk.

With that in mind, you may sometimes choose to weigh the benefits of temporary patient care against those known risks. Potential patients may warrant extra consideration when they have been referred to you by current patients or trusted colleagues. Providing care to these patients promotes a positive working relationship between you and the referrer and ensures you will continue to get referrals from them on an ongoing basis—not all of which will be temporary.

Online reputation management is another factor that should be considered when deliberating accepting a temporary patient. If the patient reached out to your office due to positive provider reviews discovered online, they are more likely to leave a review of their own. Such reviewers have been known to leave negative feedback based on their interaction with office staff when initially seeking care.

Because your office staff are the first point of contact with any potential patient, they should be trained to offer thoughtful, compassionate service to anyone who requests an appointment. If you choose to accept emergency or short-term patients on a case-by-case basis, be sure your office staff understands the process for case review and how to communicate that process to those seeking emergency care. The ethical standard for emergency services for patients who are not patients of record is to make “reasonable arrangements for their emergency care,” according to the ADA Principles of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct. To facilitate meeting this standard, TDIC suggests

maintaining a list of phone numbers of clinics and dental societies to provide to emergency patients who don’t have an established dental provider.

Considerate Communication and Documentation

Respectful communication and careful documentation at all points of service protect your practice’s reputation and mitigate risk. Questions on your intake forms are a good place to begin this documentation. Asking “What is the reason for your visit today?” and “When was your last dental visit and what was the name of the dentist?” are appropriate ways to identify short-term patients. Should you decide to accept a short-term or traveling patient, here are an additional five critical points of communication and documentation:

- **Whether or not the patient has a regular dentist.** If they do, make every effort to consult directly with that provider. Request any recent notes or radiography that pertain to the current treatment.
- **The patient’s detailed medical and dental histories.** This is particularly important if you are unable to obtain records from another dentist on behalf of the patient. Document past medical and dental procedures, current diagnoses and any medications.
- **The patient’s lifestyle.** To get a complete picture of health, inquire about and document aspects of the patient’s lifestyle that may impact their care. This includes travel plans and any impediments to consistent access to care.
- **Informed consent.** As with all patients, informed consent is a discussion, not just a form. Acknowledge their understanding and consent before offering any

treatment. Short-term patients should also be notified of the risks posed by postponing follow-up care.

- **The length of treatment.** If an out-of-town patient presents with a particularly complex case, it’s best not to get involved beyond palliative care. Patients who are visiting or living temporarily in your area may not have the opportunity to complete treatment under your care. Explain the importance of continuous care to the patient and encourage them to schedule a consultation with their primary dentist.

Treating “snowbirds,” college students or patients who present only on an emergency basis can be challenging, especially when another general dentist is their primary care provider. As the “secondary” general dentist, you have more liability exposure than the dentist who is performing their routine dental care. Again, the best defense is good communication between the dentist and patient and between the two treating dentists. Be sure to proactively explain to the patient the importance of continuous care with one practitioner. And if the situation becomes too complex, ask the patient to choose who will be their primary dentist. If the patient is unwilling to do so, then it’s best to consider terminating care.

Trust your instincts and have the confidence to say no to cases that make you uncomfortable. If you find yourself facing a challenging or uncertain patient care situation, consult an experienced TDIC Risk Management analyst. 🦷

The Dentists Insurance Company’s Risk Management Advice Line is a benefit available at no cost to policyholders protected by TDIC. To schedule a consultation, visit tdicinsurance.com/RMconsult or call 800.733.0633.

TMD vs TMJ

Temporomandibular Disorder (TMD) is caused by jaw, facial muscle, and joint problems. The joint responsible for chewing is called the temporomandibular joint (TMJ), and connects the temporal bone of the skull to the lower jaw.



SCIENCE behind TMD

The muscles and bones affected by TMD

- 1 TEMPORALIS MUSCLE**
closes and retracts the mandible (jaw bone)
- 2 TEMPOROMANDIBULAR JOINT**
connects the temporal bone of the skull to the mandible.
- 3 MASSETER MUSCLE**
closes the jaw for chewing.

TMD CAUSES



clenching or grinding teeth



day-to-day stress

FACT: many TMD/TMJ issues can trigger migraines and chronic headaches.

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