

Assisting Highlights

Annual Issue

January 2016

Addressing the Shortage of RDA's in Saskatchewan

Yes, we know that Saskatchewan is experiencing unprecedented shortages of Registered Dental Assistants! We feel your pain and are doing everything in our power to alleviate the situation. Sadly there are no quick fixes for this situation.

First, let's keep who we have! The 2016 Proposed Salary Guide is enclosed for your review. We believe that wages go a long way to address employee retention and shortages. It is encouraging to notice that over the past few years dental assistant wages have increased. While we could not manage it this year, next year's guide will be circulated in December to assist you and your employees with end of the year negotiations. For 2016, SDAA has increased the dental assistant salary guide by an overall 2.9%.

Wages do make a difference and we are seeing that the number of transfers to Alberta have decreased substantially over the past few years. We also have brought several of our Saskatchewan grown dental assistants home. This is all about wages, benefits and the oil patch.

SDAA's attrition from 2014 to 2015 represents approximately 73 people, at the same time there were 59 new graduates from SK Polytechnic registered. In 2015 SDAA had a total of 92 new registrants, indicating that we have had 33 new registrants from other provinces or international locations. We continue to actively advertised across

Canada for dental assistants. We recognize that the number of Saskatchewan Polytechnic graduates are insufficient to replace the number of dental assistants who annually leave the profession. With the change in the global economy, our

manpower statistical report reveals that the age 55-59 are continuing to practice while the marked decrease in dental assistants with practice status is occurring after age 60. As more baby boomers retire, the profession of dentistry will continue to face worker shortages.

Survey data has indicated that 36% of RDA's leave the profession due to retirement, 30% leave seeking new career opportunities, while 26% leave due to a lack of em-

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SASKATCHEWAN
DENTAL ASSISTANTS'
ASSOCIATION

*Registered Dental Assistants:
Partners in Infection Prevention & Control -
Ensuring Public Safety in Oral Health Facilities*

*Dental Assistant's Week
March 6 - 12, 2016*



Addressing the Shortage of RDA's in Saskatchewan (cont')

ployment benefits and 23% leave due to poor wages. This can be interpreted to indicate that 49% of our attrition is fully preventable and those employees could be retained through wages and benefits.

Employers need to provide benefits in order to compete with corporations and unions. If you are unsure about offering benefits look into the corporate world to see what benefits are being experienced.

In this light, we have posted an advertisement (page 4) for a benefit plan designed for dental assistants and office staff available through SDAA. The SDAA does not benefit from this plan, rather it exists to ensure the availability of a viable option (www.sdaabenefits.ca).

Transparency is important, particularly with youthful employees. They are not sure what questions to ask at an interview and often do not have the confidence to raise their concerns. SDAA has developed a template for an employment contract. It is posted in 'Word' format on our website for your perusal and use. We have included all the potential scenarios that we can think of, but feel free to add or delete whatever you wish. If you think that we have totally missed an important area, let us know. We look forward to improving the document.

Due to the proliferation of new dental offices throughout the province, we know that your needs cannot be fully met by wages, benefits or employment contracts. There are

some other options that the SDAA Council supports and believes to be viable. In 2013 SDAA requested that SI-AST consider offering a course for Dental Sterilization. At that time this concept was not supported by CDSS members. However, through discussion at the November, 2015 PAC meeting it now appears that there may be interest in this course. Preliminary discussions are underway at Saskatchewan Polytechnic. It was thought that it could be offered as a distance education course while the employee was working in your dental practice.

Discussions are also underway with Saskatchewan Polytechnic for a 'dental reception course'. This could be offered distance education and would use curriculum from the day program.

SDAA has pursued communication with a private dental assistant program in consideration of offering their program in Saskatchewan. At this point, this endeavour has been unsuccessful.

The SDAA is participating in the manpower conversations initiated by the College of Dental Surgeons of Saskatchewan and we believe that solutions are at hand.

Best wishes for a successful 2016.

Susan Anholt, RDA, BA
Executive Director / Registrar

Title Protection

Dental assistants in Saskatchewan use the title "**Registered Dental Assistant**" and also have title protection on the term "**Dental Assistant**".

Unlicensed employees **cannot** call themselves dental assistants as that title is reserved to registered and licensed dental individuals. Saskatchewan Health has coined the title "Dental Aide" to identify these other support team members. At chairside the activities of a dental aide are limited to suctioning, A/W syringe operation and retraction.

If you find that a dental aide has great potential, consider enrolling them in the distance education course at Vancouver Community College.

R.D.A. Certificates / Name Tags

Patients have the right to know that educated, qualified dental professionals are performing their oral health care services. Can your patients easily identify your staff members?

Registered dental assistants' are required to display their "Certificate of Registration" in their place of employment. Are you providing your staff with wall space for them to do this?

Are your staff members wearing name tags? Patients should also have access to the names of those who are providing them with care. Name tags for registered dental assistants are available through the SDAA and can be ordered at any time.

General Competencies for Registered Dental Assistants in Saskatchewan

Registered Dental Assistants in Saskatchewan hold a variety of competencies. Each member has a personalized list of competencies consistent with their original and post graduate courses training. The vast majority of RDA's in Saskatchewan hold "core competencies" which are nationally considered to be competency 1 through 13.

Individual competency lists have been created due to the diversity of competencies taught at dental assistant training programs across the country as well as the evolution of dental assistant training. This document should be reviewed during an interview or during an assessment. If you have a question regarding the specific competencies taught by any school in Canada - our office staff are able to assist you. Registered Dental Assistants have a responsibility to work within their listed competencies. Each dentist/employer shares this responsibility. A dental assistant may only practice a competency if the skill is listed with the SDAA office and the treatment is assigned by the dentist.

POTENTIAL COMPETENCIES:

- 1 Dental Radiographs, Expose, Process, Mount
- 2 Dental Dam, Place & Remove
- 3 Impressions & Bite Registration
- 4 Treatment Liners/Acid Etching/Bonding
- 5 Matrices/Wedges, Place & Remove
- 6 Rubber Cup Polishing
- 7 Oral Hygiene Instructions
- 8 Dietary Counselling
- 9 Anticariogenic Agent, application
- 10 Pit & Fissure Sealants & Acid Etching
- 11 Topical Anaesthetic
- 12 Remove Sutures/Surgical Dressings/Retraction Cord
- 13 Desensitizing Agents, Application
- 14 Pulp Vitality Testing
- 15 Polish amalgam restorations
- 16 Fabricate Provisional Crowns
- 17 Amalgam Insertion & Carving
- 18 Perform appropriate medical emergency procedures
- 19 Orthodontic Module
- 20 Provisional Crowns, Cement & Remove
- 21 Provisional Restorations, Place
- 22 Take Plaque Indices
- 23 Elastic Separators, Place
- 24 Restorative Implant Assisting Technology
- 25 Gingival Retraction Cord, Place & Remove
- 26 Coronal Whitening, Perform

POST GRADUATE COMPETENCIES:

The Saskatchewan Polytechnic Regina Campus "Insertion and Carving of Amalgam Restorations" course for licenced dental assistants does **NOT** enable Registered Dental Assistants to place and finish composite restorations. There are no expanded function dental assisting competencies in Canada associated with composite restorations. Occasionally the SDAA Registrar has received verbal complaints about dental assistants "operating a high speed" to adjust composite restorations and to adjust the bite on temporary and permanent crowns. Without a signed written complaint, we are unable to investigate but as a preventative measure the SDAA Registrar has advised the dental assistant, the dentist employer and the CDSS Registrar of the unsubstantiated complaint.

The "Placement of Retraction Cord" course is offered regularly at SK Polytechnic. If you would like your RDA to pack cord please ensure that it is on their skill list or that she/he is registered for the next course. RDA's may also place products such as Expasyl and Traxodent. Keep in mind that not all dental assistants are trained to place, cement & remove temporary crowns or place a provisional restoration. These courses are generally available on request.

The "Restorative Implant Assisting Technology" course has been redesigned to offer a Part 1 and 2. Part 1 includes general information and was offered very successfully in 2013. Part 2 will offer pre-clinical skills appropriate to restorative procedures and has been postponed to 2016. Please ensure that if you currently offer implants or plan to offer implants that your assistants have completed this program and have the necessary competencies added to their personalized skill list. Contact the Extension office at SK Polytechnic to apply for these courses.

The SDAA Council has agreed that an impression is an impression and the competency is no longer restricted to diagnostic or alginate.

Council agreed "that final polishing of composite restorations with slow speed handpiece utilizing cups, points or disc be considered a transfer skill for RDAs having successfully completed the 'Fabricate, Cement and Remove Provisional Crown' course providing that final occlusion and / or esthetics to be the responsibility of the dentist."

Competitive Insurance Programs for Dental Office Staff

The SDAA Benefit Plan has been designed by the SDAA to provide SDAA members and their families access to an affordable group insurance plan. Additionally this plan can enrol the entire staff of a dental office and provide access to enhanced coverage through the "SDAA Flex Benefits Plan" available to doctors and their staff.

The SDAA Benefit Plan is a competitive high quality program providing services and coverage of Extended Medical, Dental and long term disability plans not available from other benefit programs available to members.

<http://www.sdaabenefits.ca>

Contact: Bruce A. Hollett & Associates
401 - 1630 Pandosy Street
Kelowna, BC V1Y 1P7
Phone: 250-861-1006
Toll free: 1-866-861-1006
Fax: 250-861-6177

Job Board Update

- If you want to view the current ads on the SDAA Job Board, go to the SDAA website at www.sdaa.sk.ca. Highlight 'Employment' select "Job Board" and the various communities are listed on the pop-out box.
- The Job Board continues to allow any Dental Practice to advertise current openings at no charge.
- To post a position, you will see posting in the pop-out box. Information can be entered directly into an on-line form and submitted directly to our office. **Only online posting** is accepted at this time. Our staff simply do not have the time to enter your data.
- In 2016, SDAA listed 318 Positions on our Job Board. Of these, 235 positions were filled and 83 remained open.
- SDAA assumes that if you have an ad posted on the job board that you are actively seeking staff to fill a vacancy. We kindly ask that as soon as the position has been filled that you contact our office and we will remove it.
- SDAA will not repost ads on the Job Board in order to position your ad to the top of the list, we simply do not have the time. If you pull a position we will not repost that position for two weeks; hopefully this will avoid offices jockeying for position on the board. You are welcome to amend your posting at any time.
- From time to time our staff will email your office to confirm if the position remains open. The position will be pulled if you fail to respond to our email.

"Respected, Responsible, Competent Oral Health Professionals"

Please ensure that the dental assistants in your employ are currently licenced, and also determine if they hold a practice or non-practice licence. Visit www.sdaa.sk.ca "About Us" to view the full current listing.

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