

Assisting Highlights

Annual Issue

December 2017

Addressing the Shortage of RDA's in Saskatchewan

Our statistics on the SDAA Job Board indicate that the shortage of dental assistants continues, but has to some extent been alleviated.

To this point in the year, SDAA has registered 57 Saskatchewan graduates and an additional 51 applicants from outside of Saskatchewan. Our annual attrition is approximately 75 people, so our net gain this year may be as many as 31 members.

Our largest cohort of active providers total 291 members, aged 25-29 years and there are 104 in the 55-59 age group. Our labour force is fairly balanced across the age cohorts until age 60. All this to say that dental offices are retaining an age-balanced work force. This speaks well for many practices. However, the balance also reveals that significant numbers of baby boomers will retire each year and the profession of dentistry in Saskatchewan will continue to face manpower shortages. If you want to see the statistics yourself, just follow this link: https://sdaa.in1touch.org/site/cihi_report.

We are inclined to repeat; let's keep who we have! The 2018 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. We are circulating our salary guide in December to assist you and your employees with end of the year negotiations. For 2018, SDAA has increased the dental assistant salary guide by an overall 1.7%.

Wages do make a difference and we are seeing that the number of transfers to Alberta have decreased substantially over the past few years. In fact, you continue to bring several of our Saskatchewan grown dental assistants home. This is all about wages, benefits and the continu-

ing saga of the oil patch.

We continue to actively advertise 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.

**PROTECT YOUR PRACTICE...
ENSURE THAT YOUR RDA IS
LICENCED...**

go to...

www.sdaa.sk.ca

go to... About Us

select 'Member Search'



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

*Dental Assistant's Week
March 4- 10, 2018*

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

Mobility from office to office is very likely related to the reality of paying the rent, a car loan or kid's clothing. 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. We noted that 61% of our respondents have dental benefits and 54% have professional development registration fees paid. A low 31% have a benefit plan that included massage therapy which alone might prolong the working career of an RDA.

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 you of 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

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.

by wages, benefits or employment contracts. There are some other options that the SDAA council supports and believes to be viable. To this end:

- ◆ The Southern Alberta Institute of Technology is very serious about setting up a dental assistant program in Saskatoon. The SAIT Dental Assistant Program is a long-standing, well respected program and we will keep you posted!
- ◆ Saskatchewan Polytechnic will be offering an online course for Instrument Sterilization. This course can be completed while a dental aide is employed and gaining practical experience in your dental practice.
- ◆ We are pleased to announce that Axiom Career College is now offering 'Dental Office Administration'.

SDAA is somewhat concerned that the CDSS is considering becoming an educator; offering an online course in IPC, insurance forms and operator set up etc. In general, it is a safe conclusion that regulators are wise to focus on regulation and that educators are in the best position to educate! It would be extremely unfortunate to see three viable, long-term solutions to the manpower crisis fail because of a stop-gap measure.

Best wishes for a successful 2018.

Susan Anholt, RDA, BA
Executive Director / Registrar

R.D.A. Certificates / Name Tags

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

Registered dental assistants are required to display their current "Practice Permit" 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 training. The vast majority of RDAs 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 competencies that are formally taught, listed with the SDAA and when the treatment is directed 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 licensed 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 competency list or that she/he is registered for the next course. RDAs 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 as 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. Course development for Part 2 is underway.

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.”

A national committee has reviewed and recommended the standardization of orthodontic competencies which will eventually bring all orthodontic assistants to the Saskatchewan standard.

If you have any questions regarding the competencies of RDAs in your employ, please contact the SDAA office.

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 for RDAs 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.
- To date in 2017, SDAA has listed 233 positions on our Job Board. Of these, 186 positions were filled and 47 remain 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 cannot 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 phone or email your office to inquire whether the position remains open. The position will be pulled if you fail to respond to our inquiry.

"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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