

A Century of Service

Students, Auxiliaries and Accreditation (Part Nine of a Series)

From the time of its founding 100 years ago the Canadian Dental Association has maintained a close liaison with dental students. The Committee on Dental Education was one of the first standing committees of the Association, and through the years it has provided a lively forum for debate, study and planning. This was no chance happening. CDA recognizes that dental students are tomorrow's dentists and any worthy effort on behalf of the student is an investment in the destiny of the profession. Also, many of the founding fathers were closely aligned with dental education. Five of the first 10 CDA presidents were deans: J.B. Willmott, E. Dubeau, A.E. Webster, J. Nolin and F. Woodbury. The interest of academics and dental school leaders in the future of the Association has continued to this very day.



Maritime Dental College, c1917

Council on Dental Education

In 1945, under a new CDA Constitution, the Committee on Dental Education was restructured and renamed a "Council." Its detailed report laid much of the groundwork for dental education for years to come. In 1948, the five existing dental schools — Toronto, McGill, Montreal, Dalhousie and Alberta — had a total enrollment of 910 male and 12 female students. Twelve women may not seem like very many, but it was an improvement over previous years. For example,

in 1923 only six women had graduated from the University of Toronto, along with 315 men.

In 1950 the CDA published its first brochure on "Dentistry as a Career" in the belief that an "enlightened society in the years ahead will greatly enlarge the dental service which the public now receives."

Accreditation

Also in 1950, following years of preparatory work, the CDA Council on Dental Education announced plans to survey and accredit dental schools. With a grant from the Kellogg Foundation, the Council announced that the *"chief aim of the survey work is directed toward the improvement of dental education. The Council desires to be helpful in attaining a high degree of excellence in the training of dental students and wishes to cooperate with the responsible agencies."* A significant outcome of the accreditation process was that in 1956 the American Dental Association's Council on Dental Education voted unanimously to give full recognition to the five dental schools in Canada. This marked a degree of dental education reciprocity between the United States and Canada that persists today.

Accreditation of all dental teaching facilities in Canada came to be referred to as one of CDA's "sacred trusts." In 1991 responsibility for accreditation was transferred to the autonomous arm's-length Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada, which reports to the CDA Board of Governors.

Dental Aptitude Test

In 1966 the CDA Executive Council authorized an allocation of \$9,500 to launch the dental aptitude test



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recommended by the Council on Dental Education. Investigation by the Council on Dental Education had shown that *“the aptitude tests made it possible to predict, with a high degree of accuracy, the probable success of students in dental schools.”* The first tests were given in January 1967 at a cost to each candidate of \$15.00.



Canadian Dental Students' Conference

When the CDA Board of Governors met in 1969 the number of dental schools in Canada had risen from five to nine. Although dental students had input into CDA affairs through the Student Membership Committee, they understandably were looking for a more tangible way to be involved. The Board and Executive Council were quick to respond.

The first Canadian Dental Students' Conference, chaired by David Kenny from the University of Western Ontario, took place November 20–22, 1969. Topics included teaching of basic sciences, dental political organizations, scholarships, insurance and other priorities of college students. The Conference has been an annual event since then.



Representatives from nine dental schools at the first Canadian Dental Students' Conference, November 1969. David Kenny, front row, second from the right, chaired the meeting.

A major step forward for dental students occurred when the Board of Governors at the 1974 annual meeting gave unanimous approval to the proposal that the Canadian Dental Students' Conference have one voting representative on the Board. This was a first for any national dental association in the world.

National Dental Examining Board

It was important 100 years ago, and it is important today, that there be an equitable system of dental registration in every province. That is why, at the first Canadian Dental

Association meeting, the introduction of a national examination recognized by all provinces was foremost on the agenda. The result was the formation of the Dominion Dental Council in 1904. This Council's certificate eventually became recognized for registration by seven provinces and, at times, eight provinces — but never by all provinces at the same time.

In 1948 the CDA Board of Governors recommended that the Council on Dental Education set out the principles for a national examining board. In 1952, the Canadian House of Commons passed the bill establishing the National Dental Examining Board (NDEB). **Dr. Howard J. Merkley** (right) of Winnipeg was the first president and Dr. H.N. Beach of Ottawa the first registrar-secretary. The first examination of 80 candidates was held in June 1954; 62 candidates were successful. Dr. C. Ronald Hill, of the University of Alberta, obtained the highest mark.



In 1970 the NDEB was granted representation on the CDA Council on Education and ever since has participated in accreditation surveys. Until the year 2000, graduates of Canadian universities were offered the NDEB certificate without examination and a complete examination facility was maintained for foreign dentists. Since 2000, Canadian and American graduates are required to complete the NDEB written examination and the Objective Structured Clinical Examination. Graduates of non-accredited programs — foreign students — must apply for admission to a qualifying program at a Canadian faculty of dentistry.

Association of Canadian Faculties of Dentistry

In March 1967, following the meeting of the American Association of Dental Schools in Washington, DC, the attending deans and other representatives of Canadian dental schools founded the Association of Canadian Faculties of Dentistry (ACFD) with Dean J.W. Neilson, University of Manitoba, chosen as the first president. Since then the ACFD has had a profound influence on every aspect of dental education throughout Canada.

Dental Nurses and Dental Assistants

No one is really sure when the first “assistant” began working at chairside with a dentist but it can be assumed that some type of assistance has been provided throughout the “modern” era (the last 150 years). Very little information is available on the early role of dental assisting but we do know that the Father of Orthodontics, American



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Dr. Norman W. Kingsley (1829–1913), outlined in 1883 the duties of a dental assistant:

She stands at the side of the chair during an operation and her ability to fill all the requirements of an assistant at the moment is unexcelled. There are 1001 little polite attentions to patients that good breeding require, but which unfortunately take the valuable time of the dentist.

Undoubtedly, during the preceptor/apprentice days of dentistry, the person in that position — invariably a man — would be called upon to assist the dentist as part of his training. And during World War I, dental assistants — who had the rank of sergeant — assisted the dental officers at chairside. After the war there was renewed discussion respecting the use and training of dental auxiliaries. In 1917, a resolution was adopted at the annual meeting of Quebec licentiates requesting the establishment of a training course for dental nurses, but no action followed.

Dental Nurses in Ontario

Pearl Bartindale, a dental assistant in Hamilton in the early 1900s, describes in her brief history of dental nursing her trip how she met Dr. A.E. Webster, dean of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons, while on route to a convention in Winnipeg in May 1914. As they discussed the possibility of a training facility for dental nurses, it appears that she found a sympathetic ear, but with the intervention of World War I, it was not until 1919 that the College established a one-year dental nursing course and enrolled its first class of 17 women. The dental nursing course at the University of Toronto Faculty of Dentistry was discontinued in 1960.

Dental auxiliary training reappeared in an evening technical school “course in dental assisting” sponsored by the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario in the fall of 1960. In 1963 the first formal course in Canada, where dental assisting was taught within a secondary school program, occurred in Scarborough, Ontario.

New Zealand

In 1921, in response to a high incidence of dental disease in school children, the New Zealand Department of Health commenced a two-year training program for dental nurses. Upon graduation the dental nurse worked within the school system to provide dental education, prophylaxis, fillings and extractions for children up to the age of 12. The success of the program was impressive. Within 15 years the ratio of extractions per 100 fillings dropped from 115 to 14.6. The success of the New Zealand Dental Nurse program would be debated in Canada for years.

Dental Hygienists

Dr. Alfred G. Fones (1869–1938) of Bridgeport, Connecticut, is credited with training the first dental hygienist in 1905 — his office assistant, Mrs. Irene Newman — to examine and polish teeth for the children in his practice. In 1913 Dr. Fones opened the Fones Clinic for Dental Hygienists — in his garage. Twenty-seven women graduated that first year. Most worked for the Bridgeport school system with startling results. The caries rate for children participating in the dental hygienists’ program was reduced by 75%.

By 1945 there were about 7,000 dental hygienists practicing in the United States — about half in private practices and half in public health departments and hospitals. The first mention of a dental hygienist in Canada was in the 1920s when a hygiene graduate from the Forsythe Dental Infirmary in Boston was in charge of the dental clinic at the Laurentide Health Service in Grand’Mère, Quebec.

In 1947 the Board of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario passed a resolution asking the CDA Council on Dental Education to recommend standardization of education for dental hygienists. In 1950, the College of Dental Surgeons of Saskatchewan was the first in Canada to effect bylaws for the regulation of dental hygienists. **Miss Mary Brett** (right) of Regina became the first dental hygienist to be registered in Canada.



The first two-year diploma course for dental hygienists began at the University of Toronto in September 1951. The tuition fee was \$250. The first class of five graduated in June 1953. By 1960 there were 98 dental hygienists registered in Canada.

In 1969 a study in Prince Edward Island funded by a public health research grant investigated expanded duties for the dental hygienist, which included placement of rubber dam, matrices and insertion of fillings.

Dental Therapists

In 1972, in response to the primary care needs of people in the Canadian Arctic, the Department of National Health and Welfare embarked on a New Zealand type program to train dental therapists. Based in Fort Smith in the Northwest Territories, the School of Dental Therapy was designed to graduate 30 students annually from its two-year program. Moving to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, in 1982 the program created controversy in that it was the first of its kind to permit restorative dental treatment without direct supervision of a dentist.



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In response to its provincially funded Children's Dental Health Program, the Saskatchewan government in 1972 commenced a two-year Dental Nursing Program at the Wascana Institute in Regina. By the 1970s, all provinces except Alberta, Ontario and New Brunswick had some type of government-sponsored children's dental program, but only Saskatchewan and Manitoba used therapists who provided treatment without the direct supervision of a dentist. Today, only Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Newfoundland have a provincially sponsored children's dental program and only the federal government uses the services of dental therapists in its northern program.

Dental Technicians

A century ago most dentists were either doing their own laboratory work or employed a technician to work in their office. In the days of indentured-ship it was often the "dentist in training" who did much of the laboratory work. As time went by, however, more and more "independent" technicians were setting-up business on their own and working more profitably for several dentists. In both world wars dental technicians were trained for the military and on demobilization found a ready market for



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their skills. Commercial laboratories grew in number and as long as there was mutual respect for their respective roles in the provision of dental care, harmony existed between dentist and technician.

However, ours is not a perfect world and mutual respect and harmony were often wanting — on both sides. By the late 1940s the term illegal dentistry was heard more and more, as technicians began to provide prosthetic services directly to the public. The fact that by 1960 there were 1,900 dental technicians in Canada — one for every three dentists — undoubtedly contributed to the problem. At its annual meeting in 1958 the Canadian Dental Association adopted unanimously a firm resolution in support of the ethical technician. The closing paragraph of the long resolution clearly states the CDA stand: *"That the Canadian Dental Association hereby officially does recognize the valued contribution of dental technicians through their services to the dentist, for the Canadian public."*

Denturists

Despite the best efforts of dentists to prevent the "illegals" from dealing directly with the public, far too often the exercise was futile as it became a battle fought in the media.

Today in Canada, denturism is recognized in every province except Prince Edward Island and approximately 2,000 denturists deal directly with the public in the provision of full and partial dentures.

The Canadian Dental Association: 1902-2002 — A Century of Service is a Centenary project of the Canadian Dental Association in collaboration with the Dentistry Canada Fund, the charitable foundation for the dental profession in Canada. The 11-part series is written by Dr. Ralph Crawford, Historian and Past President of CDA.



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