

## Dalhousie Grants Its First Bachelor of Dental Hygiene Degrees

By Nancy Neish, BA, DipDH, MEd

A milestone event took place in May 2009 when the school of dental hygiene at Dalhousie University graduated its first students from the Bachelor of Dental Hygiene (BDH) program.

The BDH program is available to dental hygienists who have obtained a Diploma in Dental Hygiene and have met the requirements to be licensed in Nova Scotia. The program requires an academic year (September to April) to complete the degree and allows entry to a maximum of 16 students, who must attend the program on a full-time basis. The program prepares students for many of the expanded roles that are beginning to emerge for dental hygienists across Canada.

The focus of the BDH degree is on teaching methodologies, research, alternate practice settings, health promotion and health policy. It is anticipated that populations who are currently vulnerable or lacking in oral health care, such as the frail elderly living in long-term care facilities or people undergoing cancer care, will have improved access to oral care delivered by BDH graduates. Students in the BDH program are licensed to practise in the province and have the opportunity to provide oral health care services in these alternate practice settings. Currently the demand for oral care services by such institutions is greater than the number of BDH students available.

Establishing outreach programs for vulnerable populations and promoting interprofessional health education are 2 of the primary goals of Dalhousie's faculty of dentistry—and the BDH program supports both of these goals. The BDH program also provides additional preparation for students who may be interested in pursuing a career in public health, dental hygiene education, research or continuing on toward a master's level education.

While other Canadian universities offer a degree completion opportunity for a Bachelor of Science (Dental Hygiene), the Dalhousie program is unique in that it grants the first Bachelor of Dental Hygiene (BDH) degree. The evolution of the BDH program began over 20 years ago and came to fruition through the collaboration and efforts of the dental hygiene faculty, the Dean's Office, the faculty of dentistry and Dalhousie University's administration.

For more information, visit [www.dentistry.dal.ca/prospective/BDH/index.html](http://www.dentistry.dal.ca/prospective/BDH/index.html). ❖

*Ms. Neish is an assistant professor and director of the school of dental hygiene at Dalhousie University.*

Cite this article as: *J Can Dent Assoc* 2010;76:a41

### Cover Photo

Faculty members and students from Dalhousie University's faculty of dentistry and school of dental hygiene are featured on the *JCDA* cover.

**Back row** (L. to r.): Nancy Webb, manager of academic affairs; Dr. Robert MacDonald, associate professor, department of dental clinical sciences, division of comprehensive care; Dr. John Christie, assistant professor, department of dental clinical sciences, division of comprehensive care, removable prosthodontics; Dr. Kathy Russell, head, department of dental clinical sciences, division of orthodontics; Dr. Tom Boran, dean of dentistry.

**Front row** (L. to r.): Cara Tax, assistant professor, school of dental hygiene; Jessica Rix, DH 2009; Nancy Neish, director, school of dental hygiene; Mike Lowe, DDS 2009.

The Dalhousie faculty would like to gratefully acknowledge Marilyn Klein, communications officer, for her efforts in coordinating this *JCDA* special edition. ❖

