



A Tribute to a Friend: Dr. Connie L. Drisko

The dental and dental hygiene profession lost a true treasure in June of this year. Dr. Connie L. Drisko died from a recent diagnosis of acute myelogenous leukemia. Connie began her career in the dental profession when she graduated from Baylor College of Dentistry, Caruth School of Dental Hygiene, in 1961 with honors and a certificate. She later pursued a BS degree from Baylor and graduated in 1975. During that time Connie contributed to dental hygiene by clinical practice and clinical teaching...at Tyler Junior College in Texas and at the University of Oklahoma. Connie practiced as a dental hygienist for 16 years before she entered dental school at the University of Missouri - Kansas City. Her love for learning did not end there! She went on to complete a General Practice Residency from the Veteran's Affairs Medical Center in Kansas City, MO and then a certificate in periodontics from the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Leavenworth, Kansas. Then...she entered a long and successful academic career.

I could go on and on about how she served as Associate Dean for Research, Associate Dean for Academic Planning and Faculty Development, and Director of the Dental Education and Research Center at the University of Louisville School of Dentistry in Louisville, KY; was a fellow of the prestigious Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine Program for Women (ELAM); was one of a very few female deans, serving in that role for 10 years at the College of Dental Medicine at Georgia Regents University (GRU); oversaw construction of a new state-of-the-art dental school in Georgia; was awarded GRU's inaugural employee Diversity Award for promoting and enhancing diversity among staff, faculty, and students...and on and on. I recommend that you search her name on the internet to see all of the contributions she has made to dental hygiene and dentistry because they are too many to write in this editorial!

Even though Connie accomplished many things in her career, I will remember Connie mostly for 3 things. First, she did not let age get in the way of achieving her goals. She was the first to tell people that she was the oldest dental student in her class. One must remember that she graduated from den-

tal school in 1980 when there were few female dental students ... much less older female dental students!! Connie had gifts and goals and she was determined to make it happen. We could all learn a lot from her about not putting goals on hold. Second, Connie contributed tremendously to the dental and dental hygiene literature. I have read Connie's extensive reviews of the periodontal debridement literature for most of my career and I always knew I could count on her papers to be thorough and evidence based. She never wavered from her core values of honesty and being trustworthy in professional writings. Connie's most recent contribution was an article titled, "Periodontal Debridement: Still the Treatment of Choice."¹ As Guest Editor of the Evidence Based Dental Practice Annual Report on Dental Hygiene, Dr. Terri Tillis noted that Connie's paper... "was a final gift to dental hygiene." In the paper, Connie discussed the evidence base for several treatment options for inflammatory periodontitis. Emphasizing that dental hygienists specialize in providing treatment of this inflammatory disease, she sought to clearly present the existing evidence. Connie achieved many accolades in dentistry but she never forgot her dental hygiene roots! Lastly, I will never forget Connie's attitude. She was always warm, welcoming, encouraging... and she always had a huge, beautiful smile on her face. She was a leader and a mentor and the first to encourage others to believe in themselves. The late Maya Angelou once quoted the following, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." Connie made people feel better about themselves and the world around them. We will miss you Connie.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Wilder, RDH, BS, MS
Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Dental Hygiene

References

1. Drisko CL. Periodontal debridement: still the treatment of choice. *J Evid Based Dent Pract.* 2014;14 Suppl:33-41.e1.