

Leadership and Research: Do They Impact Decision Making in Dental Hygiene?

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How does leadership impact decisions that are made about our profession? We will explore these areas in the coming year. For example, in September the ADHA published the white paper on Transforming Dental Hygiene Education and the Profession for the 21st Century. As I write, the members of the ADHA Council on Research are revising and updating the National Dental Hygiene Research Agenda. A proposal is underway for the first doctoral program in dental hygiene in the United States. All of these initiatives take leadership and vision to make them happen. But how does research and scholarship impact these decisions?

Thousands of articles and books have been published on effective leadership skills. We know that leaders have certain qualities that can assist them in leading employees, organizations and associations, members, students, etc. Some of these qualities frequently listed of leaders are passionate, visionary, courageous, great communicator. Passion is important for a leader, believing in a greater cause that will improve people and organizations in the future. Vision is important as it helps the leader look "outside of the box" and see how the future could be different. Knowing that change does not come with a roadmap, the leader must be able to guide the team though seeing the vision the same way the leader sees it. Communication skills are essential. If one is to lead and promote change, the leader must be able to clearly and succinctly describe what he/she wants to do or change. Courage is important because change is hard! The leader will not always be embraced and liked for his/her ideas.

A true leader will listen, make a decision and have the courage to move toward the vision or re-think and revise. But one thing that is certain...not everyone will be pleased.

While leaders need to have particular qualities to be effective, I would also add that they need to have investigative skills. They need to consider research evidence when making decisions that will impact others. Beginning with the February issue of the Journal of Dental Hygiene, six different leaders in dental hygiene will write about how leadership and evidence help guide decisions. Each leader will write about a different area that will impact the future of the dental hygiene profession and how they have used their leadership skills along with research data/evidence to make decisions and promote change. Topics include education, research, professional development programs, and others. I look forward to hearing from the experts who will contribute to the JDH editorials in 2016 and encourage you to read and share what they have to say with others!

As we close 2015, I want to thank you for being a part of the American Dental Hygienists' Association and particularly for your support of the scholarship and research of the profession.

Sincerely,

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