

The Impact of Leadership and Research on Decision Making

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During 2016 our theme for the *Journal of Dental Hygiene* editorials was “The Impact of Leadership and Research on Decision Making.” During the year we published editorials from five of the nation’s leading dental hygiene leaders on how leadership and research impact decision making on vital topics in our profession such as transformation of dental hygiene, the development of doctoral degrees in dental hygiene, forming collaborations and shared partnerships, leading through research . . . and, from the Chief Executive Officer of ADHA . . . the power of knowledge.

For this editorial, I would like to present some significant thoughts from the editorials—pieces of knowledge for you to take with you into the New Year. I challenge you to think about how leadership and research impacts your decision making!

May each of you have a wonderful holiday season and New Year!

Sincerely,
Rebecca S. Wilder, RDH, MS
Editor-in-Chief, *Journal of Dental Hygiene*

From Ann Battrell, MSDH; CEO, American Dental Hygienists’ Association

THE POWER OF KNOWLEDGE

- It is important that leaders create a vision of the person they want to be, and that they have the mentors to do so.
- In order to make sense of complex issues and to make decisions in the best interest of the organization, today’s leaders (as well as future leaders) need to possess critical thinking skills that enable sound decision making.
- The underpinning of the decision making process is evidence and knowledge. Evidence and knowledge provides the answer to the fundamental question of “What do I know about . . .” Dental hygienists in a clinician role have the responsibility for using the dental hygiene process of care to ultimately determine a dental hygiene diagnosis

and treatment plan, and evaluate the oral health outcomes for their patients. Scientific evidence, or knowledge, is the underpinning upon which oral health care providers should make their decisions.

- Simply asking ourselves the question “What do I know about . . .” is the starting point to searching for knowledge, information and scientific evidence for the critical thinking necessary for leaders in all of the professional roles of a dental hygienist.

From Tami Grzesikowski, RDH, MEd; Senior Director of Allied Dental Education, American Dental Education Association

WHO IS GOING TO LEAD THE TRANSFORMATION OF DENTAL HYGIENE?

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that employment of dental hygienists will grow 19% in the next decade. In 2015, the American Dental Education Association recently reported 292 retirements for dental hygiene in the next 5 years representing approximately 2 faculty for each program.
- A decision regarding one’s professional journey is important and it’s imperative that one uses evidence to support the decision.
- It is crucial that we provide leadership and guidance to our new team members regardless of the setting.
- Eight dental hygiene leaders from the ADHA and ADEA are part of a collaboration titled the ADEA Curriculum Change and Innovation (ADEA CCI) workgroup with the ADHA. This group began working over two years ago with the goal to increase and enhance professional development and leadership opportunities for dental hygiene professionals for the future transformation of the dental profession. This workgroup collected data and information on voids in dental hygiene education. They established the priority of building a cadre of new leaders in dental hygiene education

that are prepared to assume responsibilities and lead the profession into the next century of dental hygiene.

- Each and every one of us has the opportunity to lead and it is our responsibility to be a mentor and leader to the new generation of dental hygienists.

From JoAnn Gurenlian, RDH, MS PhD; Professor and Graduate Program Director at Idaho State University

DOCTORAL DEGREES IN DENTAL HYGIENE—A TRUE TRANSFORMATION FOR DENTAL HYGIENE EDUCATION

- In 2005, the American Dental Hygienists' Association (ADHA) published a document entitled "Dental Hygiene: Focus on Advancing the Profession." Within this paper, the profession recognized that dental hygiene scholars were needed to lead the development of theory and knowledge unique to the discipline of dental hygiene and that there was a shortage of dental hygiene faculty that was expected to continue into the future. The leaders noted that doctoral preparation of dental hygienists is essential for building the dental hygiene knowledge base for advancing the professionalization process. Over the next decade, discussions occurred further supporting the need for doctoral education in dental hygiene, workshops were offered establishing interest in creating doctoral programs for dental hygiene, and research has been conducted about this topic.
- As this transformation of dental hygiene education occurs, the profession will change. Theory development will advance, research will broaden, new academicians will be prepared and a higher level of clinicians will be contributing to improving the oral health challenges of the nation. Equally exciting, these graduates will possess four years of education at the graduate level equivalent to other health care professionals.

From Deborah Lyle, RDH, BS, MS Director of Professional and Clinical Affairs for Water Pik, Inc.; Chair, Council on Research for ADHA

LEADING THROUGH RESEARCH

The current revision of the NDHRA was designed to support the core ideology to lead the transformation of the dental hygiene profession, the vision that dental hygienists are integrated into the healthcare

delivery system and the values of service, collaboration, quality, community, lifelong learning and ethics.

A research agenda helps:

- Balance internal and external influences to make good decisions
- Provides a capacity to influence clinical practice and public policy
- Provides the next generation of questions that will advance the science of dental hygiene
- Focus funding in research topics that will help make informed decision about initiatives for the future
- The idea to develop a conceptual research model was predicated on providing a document that could be utilized by educators who teach research concepts at all levels, graduate students and novice researchers. Experienced researchers may also use this when mentoring junior faculty and new researchers.

This revised research agenda is intended to guide researchers, educators, clinicians and students in advancing the profession through research by generating new knowledge within the discipline. It provides a visual framework for conceptualizing how individual research topic addresses ADHA priorities. Dental hygiene research and researchers are necessary, relevant and integral to our future.

From Ann Eshenaur Spolarich, RDH, PhD; Professor and Director of Research at Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health

FORMING COLLABORATIONS AND SHARED PARTNERSHIPS

- There is an old saying that "two heads are better than one." Certainly, there are many opportunities for healthcare providers to participate in collaborative work efforts, including for conducting original research.
- Studies have shown that even small differences in work effort by one or more individuals on a team lead to large differences in the degree of effectiveness.
- Collaboration is critical for growing the knowledge base that supports dental hygiene education and practice. Working together enables researchers to maximize the utilization of limited resources, capitalizes on existing skill sets of experienced

investigators, and allows for expansion of both the scope and depth of proposed projects. Collaborative efforts also may allow for enhanced efficiency in addressing prioritized topics identified through published research agendas.

- Dental hygiene educators and leaders within the profession must partner with the dental hygiene research community to disseminate knowledge gained through research. Knowledge changes very quickly, but translation and adoption of new knowledge are slow. Tremendous progress has been made with the acquisition of new knowledge gained through original research, as evidenced by the expansion of the number of issues of the *Journal of Dental Hygiene*, and the increase in the number of journals devoted to dental hygiene. However, getting dental hygienists to read journal articles is still a major challenge. Socialization to reading research papers must begin with dental hygiene students, with an emphasis placed

on how that knowledge supports their decision-making. More effort is needed on the part of the leadership within the research community to encourage knowledge translation so that the adoption of this knowledge can be measured through changes in education and practice.

- Ongoing efforts are needed to further enhance the culture of research by keeping research efforts in front of the members of our dental hygiene professional organizations, by sharing research activities with leaders of dental hygiene organizations, by encouraging dental hygiene theory development, and by engaging key stakeholders in knowledge translation and adoption. Participation on interprofessional collaborative teams will also help to expand the reach of dental hygiene research projects through promotion of oral health within initiatives aimed towards improving general health.