

Honoring Rebecca Wilder, RDH, MS



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The *Journal of Dental Hygiene* (*JDH*) is the premier scholarly, peer reviewed, research publication for dental hygiene and plays a key role in advancing the profession. During her fourteen-year tenure as the *JDH* Editor in Chief, Professor Rebecca Wilder has transformed the dissemination of dental hygiene



research and significantly influenced the integrity of dental hygiene in the literature. With the guiding principle of promoting high-impact, evidence-based research, she crafted a platform for dental hygienists to share knowledge and define how we practice, educate, advocate, and grow the dental hygiene discipline. This year marks the conclusion of Rebecca's tenure in this role, as the American Dental Hygienists' Association (ADHA), like so many other professional organizations, has been forced to make significant changes as a result of the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we pivot to be nimble in light of these changes, it is important to take a moment to express gratitude for the many contributions Rebecca Wilder has made to the dental hygiene profession in her role as the *JDH* Editor-in-Chief from 2006-2020.

Rebecca's first publication in the *JDH* was in 1982 as a junior author of, "A Comparison of Amalgam Finishing Techniques: A Scanning Electron Microscopic Study." From that starting point, her research contributions have explored a wide range of topics from educational best practices to major research studies on periodontal disease and pregnancy. She has been a prolific researcher and author throughout her

career and continues to support the development of high-impact studies that translate into improved patient outcomes. Through her role as *JDH* Editor-in-Chief, she has been a guardian of truth, quality, and collaboration; influencing the value of information to enhance educational success and improve patient care.

I have had the honor of learning from Rebecca as an undergraduate and graduate dental hygiene student and later on in my career as a junior faculty member. When I entered academia, our professional relationship blossomed effortlessly, and she took me under her wings. It is an honor to call her my colleague, mentor, and friend. Throughout my educational and professional advancements, she has remained a true mentor, always dedicated to helping others reach their potential.

Many in the dental hygiene community know Rebecca Wilder as a brilliant speaker, periodontal expert, leader in education, and *JDH* Editor-in-Chief. However, what many people may not have experienced is her kind and gentle manner, her fierce loyalty, and selfless nature. Her poise and timeless spirit are driven by her desire to always do more and do better. She believes in people and the potential of others. It is rare to have the gift of someone like Rebecca as a both a colleague and a friend. Yet, in her role as Editor-in-Chief, we have all benefitted from her mentorship, this extension of her passion and loyalty. Her role as Editor-in-Chief, afforded her the platform to support the dissemination of high-impact research and timeless manuscripts in support of the profession. We have all experienced her mentoring, the sharing of her knowledge, and her drive to always do better.

Rebecca has dedicated her career to advancing the profession in her role as an educator. At the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Adams School of Dentistry, she has conducted significant research, and made educational, and professional contributions on the national and international level. She is a transformational leader, dedicating efforts to empowering others. She developed the school's faculty mentorship program and subsequently was selected as the first assistant dean for professional development and faculty affairs. She has been passionately loyal to the dental hygiene profession and has carved a pathway for current and future dental hygiene leaders.

Rebecca believes in people; she believes in the benefit of education and the importance of professional integrity. Her character has earned great respect in academic and dental environments. Her collaborative nature and expert communication skills have navigated through challenging environments, yet she always remains unwavering, representing those whom she believes in with great passion, integrity, and dependability. She is a positive representation of our profession and always inspiring us to be the best version of ourselves.

I would like to express my personal gratitude for the many years of dedication that Rebecca has given to the *JDH*. Our profession has been strengthened by her efforts and we have all benefited from her leadership and commitment to scholarship. I hope that you, too, feel her passion and drive, and can recognize the ways her mentoring has reached you. I challenge each of us to be transformational leaders in the dental hygiene profession.

In 2015, Rebecca wrote an editorial titled, "Living to Serve." She detailed a tragic event that forever changed lives, yet also sparked the light of service. She said,

"You don't have to possess a special talent to make a huge difference in the lives of other human beings. Can you spend a few hours each year or each month to help in your community? What will you do to make a difference?"

This is the epitome of Rebecca and her compassion for others. In these inspiring words and through her actions, she is mentoring each of us, as modeled through her dedication and passion to serve as an editor, leader in education, and trailblazer in the dental hygiene profession.

Thank you, Rebecca!

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