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The Future is Ours: Promoting Dental Hygiene

A dental hygienist acts as not only a crucial member of the dental team, but also as an educator for the community and an advocate that promotes the importance of overall health. The profession of dental hygiene has made tremendous strides since its inception in the beginning of the twentieth century. As the first dental hygienist, Irene Newman dedicated her time to growing the profession of dental hygiene and educating those in the community on the importance of oral health. It is more important now than ever to promote our profession and to make people aware what an important part of the community we are as registered dental hygienists (“RDH”). We are faced with challenges that must be overcome to make ourselves more accessible to the community. How exactly does a dental hygienist promote their profession? What steps need to be taken to achieve the main goal of growing the profession? Students and registered dental hygienists need to be active members of the American Dental Hygienists’ Association (“ADHA”), attend meetings and be active in their local components, and volunteer their time in the community.

To ignite change, power lies in numbers. Being a member of the ADHA allows individuals to come together and have their voices be heard. The association also provides resources that gives members access to information on furthering their education, leadership information, and scholarships and grants. To be a successful registered dental hygienist it is important to keep up with recent technology and new laws and regulations. This allows us, as
clinicians and educators, to provide our patients with the best information and treatment possible. When I become a registered dental hygienist, I will continue to be a member of the ADHA so I can continue to promote my profession.

It is also vital as an RDH to be active at the local level of their profession. It is important to know what is going on in your community. Attending meetings at your local component allows you to find opportunities to volunteer in the community and also provides information on continuing education courses. When legislation is trying to put new laws in place to help the profession of dental hygiene prosper, it is imperative to have the support of all RDH’s. As a student dental hygienist and a future registered dental hygienist, I will attend regular meetings with the Central New Jersey component and will always be an active member in the community.

Volunteering in the community shows you are dedicated to your profession and are willing to help promote the profession of dental hygiene. Whether you are taking part in a public health community based program or are providing oral hygiene instruction in schools, you are making strides to promote your profession. If more members of the community are educated on the importance of maintaining proper oral hygiene, the need for dental hygiene positions in the community will expand. By volunteering in schools, hospitals or nursing homes, you are making yourself more accessible to the public. If every student hygienist and registered dental hygienist made it a point to volunteer their time even once a year, it would help in the promotion of the dental hygiene profession. I have, and will continue to volunteer my time to the community throughout my professional career as a registered dental hygienist.

As a fourth semester dental hygiene student, one of the most important things I have learned is that there is nothing more important than protecting and promoting your profession. Receiving your license to practice dental hygiene seems like the final chapter to a journey of
hard work; but it is only the beginning. When I become a registered dental hygienist I promise to do all that I can to promote the profession I love. I will continue to be a member of the American Dental Hygienists’ Association, I will participate and attend regular meetings at my local component, and I will volunteer my time in the community in any way I can.