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Members Convene in Springfield to
Show Commitment to Care

Illinois Dentists Engage Senators, Congressmen in Washington



After attending ADA's Washington Leadership Conference this past April, Dr. Larry Osborne came away even more convinced that his home state is second to none when it comes to stepping up and being heard.

"Illinois gets it. Our members understand how important it is to advocate for dentistry, because honestly, no one else is going to," said Dr. Osborne, who chairs the ISDS Governmental Affairs Committee.

His assessment doesn't come without validation. Illinois was presented with two awards at the conference. ISDS boasts the highest percentage of members who are also ADPAC members. At 39%, Dr. Osborne said that is almost double the average for state dental societies. Illinois dentists also contributed the most money to ADPAC in 2014. These numbers also speak to the hard work that is being done out in the field.

"One of things we do a great job of in Illinois is getting our legislators out into the real world and showing them the need for improved dental care in our communities. Then when it's time to cast a vote to cut or reduce these programs, they're more aware of the impact it will have on real lives," he said.

The commitment to advocacy was also on full display at the conference. Dr. Osborne traveled to the nation's capital with a delegation of Action Team Leaders who were prepared to engage each of the representatives and senators representing Illinois.

"For the first time, we had a full contingent. I'm very proud. They worked hard for the three days that they were there, and we received a lot of positive feedback," he said.

Dr. Osborne said that credit for this success can be spread widely to many members who have dedicated themselves to advancing dentistry. He cited Dr. Loren Feldner, past ADPAC chair, as an example.

"Usually a past chair of any committee just kind of moves on when their term has expired. But Dr. Feldner has remained very active and he does a great job in Illinois, especially in connection with the branches of the Chicago Dental Society," he said.

With dentists from across the country amassed in Washington for the conference, efforts were focused on building support for three proposed bills.

The Action for Dental Health Act (HR 539) would allow organizations to fund dental outreach programs by applying for Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention grants. Because the bill is not calling for earmarked funding, and it is being sponsored by representatives from both sides of the aisle, there is optimism that it will be passed. That would be good news for Illinois dentists who are committed to providing care to underserved residents.

"We have a Mission of Mercy event scheduled for 2016 in Collinsville. We provide services out of more than 100 dental chairs, involving the coordination of more than 1,500 volunteers. It's a very expensive two-day event, so these grants would definitely be put to good use," Dr. Osborne said.

Another proposed bill gaining traction is the RAISE (Responsible Additions and Increases to Sustain Employee) Health Benefits Act of 2015 (HR 1185), which would raise the contribution cap to flexible spending accounts for healthcare to \$5,000, and would also allow unused funds to rollover to the next year. In addition, families would be able to save an additional \$500 for each dependent over two dependents. These improvements would be especially beneficial for families wishing to save up before seeking orthodontic treatment.

Dentists also educated legislators on the need to provide relief to new dentists through the Student Loan Refinancing Act (HR 649).

"Everybody realizes what a crisis we have in dentistry with young dentists leaving school with huge debt tied to government loans. This bill would allow them to shop around and refinance their loans as often as they would like at market rates, just like you would do for a house," Dr. Osborne said.

Networking with colleagues from around the country, Dr. Osborne said that more and more states are now facing an issue very familiar to dentists here at home—low reimbursement rates. While Illinois is still feeling this issue more deeply than elsewhere in the country, the optimism generated from his three days in Washington still casts a bright light on the profession.

"Even though it's a trying time, it's still a great time to be a dentist in Illinois. I couldn't be more proud," he said.

Dr. Osborne led the Illinois delegation which included Drs. Loren Feldner, Cheryl Watson-Lowry, Jim Maragos, Bryan Blew, Mary Hayes, Tom Sullivan, Brad Barnes, Mike Durbin, Vicki Ursitti, Ed Segal, Jon Nickelsen, Darryll Beard, Stacey Van Scoyoc, Sarah Ade, Keith Dickey, Ron Riggins, Mike Danner, Jerry Ciebien, Barry Howell, and Brenden Moon. ■

Fluoridation, HIV Speakers Top List at National Conference

When the Access to Care Committee needed a volunteer to represent ISDS at this year's National Oral Health Conference in Kansas City, Dr. William Simon was the first to raise his hand.

"I thought it would be a tremendous opportunity to engage with a lot of good people from across the country on access to care subjects as well as learn new information that could benefit our committee and its mission. Access to care is important to me and close to my heart," Dr. Simon said. The annual conference is presented by the American Association of Public Health Dentistry (AAPHD and the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD.) The three-day event, billed as the premier meeting for dental public health, was filled with presentations, workshops and discussions led by some of the most prominent experts in dentistry, and throughout the healthcare field.

The conference kicked off on April 27, with a presentation by Dr. Harold Jaffe, Associate Director for Science at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and one of the pioneering investigators in the battle against the AIDS virus.

"He led the first national case-control study to determine risk factors for HIV and first natural history study of the disease," Dr. Simon said. "His presentation was riveting, utilizing clips from the 1993 docudrama, 'And the Band Played On.'"

As the ISDS representative, Dr. Simon was charged with reporting back to the Access to Care Committee with information particularly relevant to the environment in Illinois. In his report, he cited presentations on how oral health is being impacted by the Affordable Care Act, the progress and challenges associated with providing low-income children access to sealants, and successful strategies for diverting dental pain patients away from emergency rooms.

"There is a lot of really great work going on across our country related to dental disease prevention and educating the public. There are significant struggles, however, providing access to care for all of the people who need it," Dr. Simon said.

On the occasion of its 70th anniversary, fluoridation of community water supplies was also a featured topic. ADA Executive Director Dr. Kathleen O'Loughlin was one of three presenters for a session that honored the groundbreaking public health achievement that has greatly improved oral health in the United States.

The presentation was also used to announce the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' new recommendation for the optimal fluoride level in drinking water. The previous standard recommended a range of 0.7 to 1.2 milligrams per liter, while the new standard sets it precisely at 0.7. The new level was first proposed in 2011, and was adopted after extensive studies by experts and a careful review of public comments on the issue.

"The announcement was celebrated at the conference, but after it hit the media, some of the anti-fluoridation groups misinterpreted the reduction as an admittance that fluoridation isn't as effective as health experts say. Really, the adjustment was just making the level appropriate to current evidence-based research," Dr. Simon said.


Such a reaction was not unanticipated. A Tuesday afternoon presentation at the conference was focused on the proactive use of online strategies to combat the anti-fluoridation materials, based on junk science, that proliferate on websites and social media.

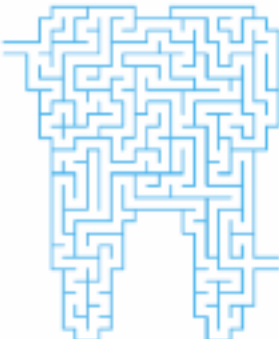
Dr. Simon described his experience at the conference as "eye opening" in terms of the challenges that still exist in improving oral health for everyone. Yet he was also impressed with the progress being made.

"There was a lot of discussion on epidemiology and prevention of dental disease, and new research being conducted in these areas. In addition, the conference highlighted new programs for educating the public about their role in the prevention of dental disease. Illinois dentists can benefit by becoming aware of the new research and programs," he said. ■

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SIU Military Dental Club Members Serve Homeless Veterans

Travis Cripps has yet to start his own military career, but he is already aware of the needs of veterans and is personally involved in seeing that they get the services that they deserve. The fourth-year student at Southern Illinois University School of Dental Medicine was one of the driving forces behind an initiative that is beginning to provide free dental care to homeless veterans in the St. Louis Metro area.

“When the country falls on hard times, we turn to our soldiers. So in a reciprocating fashion, when soldiers fall on hard times, they should be able to count on their country,” Cripps said.

The dental care outreach program is one of the first endeavors of the SIU-E chapter of the Tri-Service Military Dental Club, a national organization for dental students with prior military experience or those who plan to serve upon graduation. The club’s mission is to provide students with information on dental careers in the military and to assist them in transitioning to military life. As a commissioned 2nd Lieutenant in the Air Force who will begin serving this summer, Cripps had a personal interest in bringing the club to the campus in Alton.

“We were informed by our new clinical dean that the University of Pittsburgh had started a similar club last year. We contacted them and became the Beta chapter of their club,” he said.

The SIU-E chapter currently has ten members, including Mikel Bell, an 18-year service veteran.

Members also dedicate themselves to helping those in the community, which sparked the efforts to provide dental care to homeless veterans. The group partnered with two St. Louis-based organizations (Gateway 180 and Operation: Reveille) that focus on serving the homeless, and also received support from the Student Professionalism and Ethics Association in Dentistry.

The club has raised over \$17,000 to date for the program, including a recent grant from the SIUE Meridian Society. “We were excited to hear we had won the maximum award of \$5,000. Since that time, we have been invited to speak with many different groups, including both dental societies and community groups,” he said.



The club worked with its partner organizations in St. Louis to identify six veterans in need of service. The first three individual were provided treatment by AEGD residents in April.

“One of the goals of the program is to eventually have the dental students providing treatment. We did, however, participate in the initial screening of the veterans,” Cripps added.

The club plans to continue to raise funds so that the program can grow, with an eye towards providing care to disabled veterans as well. Due to strict limitations on dental care set by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, they believe that there is a void that club’s 40 chapters can fill.

Although his graduation day nears, Cripps plans to continue his involvement with the Tri-Star club out in California, where he will be stationed. He hopes that eventually all of the chapters from across the country will join the cause and begin offering free dental care to veterans in need.



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Dental Quality Alliance Gathers in Chicago

Many different sectors play a critical role in improving oral health in our country. A diverse group of representatives from each recently gathered at the Dental Quality Alliance's (DQA) 2015 Conference. Titled "The Roles of Quality Measurement," the event was held at ADA headquarters in Chicago. ISDS Dental Benefits Committee member Dr. Kirk Noraian was among a select group of 130 "thought and opinion leaders" who attended the conference.

"At my table alone, there was an assistant dean from Tufts University, a representative from Delta Dental of Wisconsin, someone from the DentaQuest Foundation, a dentist from the Veterans Administration, a pediatric dentist who oversees a clinic in New York, an assistant executive director from the Texas Dental Association, and the head of Louisiana Public Aid who makes all the decisions on who gets paid and who doesn't," Dr. Noraian said.

The ADA formed the DQA to establish a collaborative approach to developing performance measures that will improve oral health, patient care and safety. Bringing together the various sectors involved with making these improvements is the first step in establishing a quality framework.

"The big thing is for everyone to speak to the same language. That way everyone—the providers, the payers, the policy makers—are all using the same yardstick to measure quality and results," he said. "The fact that everyone is trying to communicate as one is really important."

Dr. Noraian said that most of the current quality standards pertain to the public health sector and are focused primarily on children. He expects that over time, however, the data being collected will be extrapolated to other groups of patients, resulting in a trickle-down effect that will impact dentists in private practice.

"They are starting to look at standards that would pertain to adults. That's part of the next wave of development," he said.

Some of the measurements being examined that were addressed at the two-day conference included chronic periodontitis, topical fluorides, patients who smoke, patients with diabetes, emergency room procedures, and follow-up.

"It was definitely cross-generational in terms of what was being addressed. They talked about the aging population and how they are prone to more decay as they get older, so that's being assessed as well,"

Patient demand is one of the driving forces behind establishing quality standards. Younger generations expect to be able to comparison shop among healthcare providers, even more so since the Affordable Care Act was enacted. Scorecards on providers already exist online, with scores based on consumer reviews, so agreed-upon industry standards would provide a more objective way to measure performance, improve patient care and reduce healthcare costs. "It's important that organized dentistry be involved because we are definitely impacted by this," he said.

Another topic addressed at the conference was an initiative to categorize patients using risk assessments and then determine care levels appropriate to each.

"From that, you're looking at how to facilitate improvements. How do you convert someone from a high-risk category to a low-risk category? And is that even doable?" he said.

Because the conference limited the number of participants, those who attended are expected to be ambassadors and take information back to share with their colleagues. While the DQA's efforts are national in scope, Dr. Noraian believes there would be a real benefit to forming a group at the state level that addresses issues specifically as they apply to Illinois.

"I don't know if that will happen, but anyone who is interested in healthcare policy and the future of dentistry should look to get involved in some way," he said. ■



Tee it up for Statewide Smiles

Mark your calendars for Thursday, September 10, day of the 8th Annual ISDS Foundation Golf Outing at Chevy Chase Country Club in Wheeling. Registration is \$175 and includes 18 holes of golf, golf cart, box lunch and 2 drink tickets. Shotgun scramble starts at 11:30am. Sponsorship information and forms are also available on-line at www.isdsfoundation.org. Support the ISDS Foundation while having fun! Everyone is welcome, bring a friend . . . or a bunch of friends, we guarantee the action packed outing will bring all golfers friendly competition and camaraderie!

Medicaid Funding Hangs in Balance as Spring Session Winds Down

The cavalry rode into town on April 22, as dentists from around the state descended upon the Capitol to make their voices heard on legislation currently making its way through the House and Senate. Members were instructed to keep their message short, simple and on topic when talking with legislators, and to use the meetings as an opportunity to form long-term relationships.

“It went well. We had a lot of participation from the members. They made their initial contacts and there’s been a lot of follow-up,” said Dave Marsh, ISDS Government Affairs Director.

In her keynote address at the Capital Conference luncheon later that afternoon, ADA President Dr. Maxine Feinberg called ISDS’ efforts a model for other states to emulate.

“I was amazed at your lobbying day and all of the dentists in attendance. They were energized, and I was energized,” Dr. Feinberg said.

The month of May looked to be a pivotal time for many of the issues that were still in limbo, including the restoration of adult dental Medicaid funding and the unsupervised dental hygienist bill. Other ISDS-supported bills are moving along as expected, including SB 750, which will require that insurance providers more accurately maintain and update their in-network provider lists.

A more recent development of note is the progress being made on ISDS-supported HB 235. This bill would amend the Illinois Insurance Code to cover charges associated with administering anesthetics to dental patients under the age of 19 who are diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder.

“We’ve been working on the language, and it looks as if it is going to pass,” Mr. Marsh said.

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Magna Dental: From Bank to Dental Office

If a patient ever asks Dr. Keith Cummins to extract a gold tooth, the Springfield dentist has the perfect place to store it for safe keeping. In the basement of his office is a 15' x 20', heavily-fortified vault with a stainless steel door featuring a two-day lockout for anyone unfortunate enough to get stuck inside.

But what's really interesting about Cummins' new office in a former bank, is the vault isn't even the most interesting thing about it.

When patients arrive for a checkup, they are instantly transported to a hunting lodge located in some beautiful and remote spot in the country. A large stone fireplace rises over the waiting area that on sunny days is bathed in natural light. A large buffalo head keeps a watchful eye on patients, while a fully intact, hand-made canoe hangs pristinely over the receptionist desk.

"We didn't want to put a bunch of holes in it because It's going with me when I retire," he said of the canoe.

Dr. Cummins is an avid outdoorsman, and his office is a testament to his passions outside of dentistry. The office is filled with trophies from his hunts, including a taxidermied bear that is quite popular with his younger patients.

"I was afraid it might scare people or maybe it would offend someone, but that's who I am. Everyone knows that I hunt and fish," he said.

His wife Candace Cummins, who handles marketing and public relations for the practice, took on the role of chief interior designer for the project. The complete makeover of the space was complicated not only by the fact that floors and furniture had to be washable; the walls, ceiling and floors of the former bank are all made of concrete, making the simple act of hanging a picture a challenge. Yet the Cummins's were able to get the look that they desired.

"We mixed a lot of antiques with newer stuff. And we went with a Texas-meets-Alaska look, because that reflects both of our personalities," she said.

It isn't all aesthetics; the staff and patients at Magna Dental enjoy amenities not commonly found in a dentist office.

The Cummins hired Henry Schein Dental to design the floor plan, which includes 11 operatories, six more than he had at his former office. The layout affords patients more privacy, while still maintaining an open feel. The basement features a laundry room, changing areas, private bathrooms, a conference room, a full kitchen and lounge, space to host CE classes, Candace's office, and, of course, the vault.

"And the vault is here to stay, because there's no getting it out of there," Dr. Cummins said.



The couple used the relocation as an opportunity to rebrand the practice, adopting the name Magna Dental from the Magna Bank branch that formerly resided there. Although some existing patients initially thought Cummins had sold out to a corporate operation, their fears were easily allayed and the practice is now better positioned for growth.

"The name will make it easier when we're bringing new dentists in so we don't have to keep adding new names to the practice," Dr. Cummins.

When they realized that they had outgrown their previous office, the couple was committed to finding an existing building. After finding the vacant bank located on a major thoroughfare into Springfield's downtown area, it took them two years to get it ready, but the time and effort has paid off. They would encourage other dentists to take this same approach when it's time to upgrade or to find a new location.

"There are so many available buildings out there that have character, and you can add your personal touch to it. If you do your homework, you can get a great deal," Candace Cummins said.

Members Convene in Springfield to Show Commitment to Care

ADA President Dr. Maxine Feinberg encouraged attendees at the 2015 Capital Conference to be bold and to seek big ideas to keep the profession moving forward.

“We must choose to control our destiny in dentistry. We have a bright future, but we still have to work to ensure that it remains bright,” she said. Dr. Feinberg was the keynote speaker at the April 22 event that set a record for attendance. The official count recorded 294 people gathered at the Springfield Hilton, an increase of over 40% from last year’s Capital Conference.

To ensure that dentistry remains vital, Dr. Feinberg stressed the importance of driving demand by embracing new technology, meeting younger generations on their terms and by staying relevant. She also addressed other familiar issues impacting dentistry including a still-lagging economy, the shifting of financing, and the enormous and yet still uncertain impact of the Affordable Care Act.

Dr. Feinberg ended her speech by thanking the dental students in the room and acknowledging the need to find solutions to relieve their tuition debt, while reminding older members that this burden will also impact them when it comes time to retire and sell their practices. She also asked that members engage these students today and tomorrow as they embark upon their careers.

“Dental students aren’t much different than we are,” she said. “They want to be part of something bigger.”

This was the first time that dental students were invited to the Capital Conference and all indications are that the decision was a success.

The morning portion of the conference was dedicated to preparing a large contingent of dental professionals on how to use their individual voices to deliver a unified message in the halls of government. ISDS Director of Government Relations Dave Marsh presented an “Engage Your Legislator” session that focused on the political process and the basics of lobbying. ISDS President Dr. Edward Segal then officially welcomed attendees, and was followed by legislative and DENT-IL-PAC briefings, delivered by Government Affairs Committee Chair Dr. Larry Osborne and DENT-IL-PAC President Dr. Michael Durbin, respectively.



“Our lobbying efforts this year were very successful as many of our attendees had extended face time with their legislators, both at the capitol or at our legislative reception,” Dr. Durbin said. “We were especially excited to have the third year dental students from SIU join us as we walked the halls of the Capitol. Their attendance sent a message to legislators that our future dentists are engaged in the political process and have a stake in the future of dental care in Illinois.”

After a productive visit to the Capitol, the participants returned to the Hilton for lunch, where Dr. Alice Boghosian, Capital Conference chair, provided opening remarks. She welcomed her colleagues and all of the dental students in attendance, then offered a personal perspective on what was transpiring, “when I think about all that we do for the profession and for dentistry overall, it gives me a very warm feeling.”

Representatives from around the state were recognized as they presented contributions to the DENT-IL-PAC. Nearly \$130,000 was presented from components and specialty groups, highlighted by a check for \$100,000 from Chicago Dental Society members.

The afternoon’s general session featured a lineup of speakers addressing many issues currently at the forefront of the dental profession. Among them were Dr. Jane Grover, director of the ADA Council on Access, Prevention, and Interprofessional Relations, who encouraged members to plan proactively to improve care, and new Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation Secretary, Bryan Schneider, who extended his agency’s commitment to work closely with dentists as the new administration takes measures to improve the state’s economic position.

Capital Conference wrapped up with an well-attended, evening Legislative Reception. Looking back on the event, Dr. Boghosian said that it was a memorable day that bodes well for the future of dentistry in Illinois.

“All in all, it was a tremendous success because of the hard work from our ISDS staff and the efforts put forth by our members,” she said. ■

ISDS Rocks at R & R!



Over 180 dentists and volunteers attended the Annual Membership Recruitment and Retention Conference hosted by the ADA Council on Membership in Chicago this past April. Among the attendees was a contingent of over 15 representatives from Illinois, who were on hand to see their state win two top awards. ISDS took home the award for Greatest Percentage of New Dentists to Membership (societies with 3,501 to 7,500 members) and was recognized as the state dental society with the greatest student conversion rate.

“These awards are a testament to the hard work of membership staff and volunteers from across the state. The rest of the country will continue to look at Illinois as an example of how to reverse our membership market share decline,” said ISDS member Dr. Michael Durbin, who chairs the ADA Council on Membership.

In addition, the Chicago Dental Society (CDS) was also the local component with the greatest student conversion rate and were the only component society to win an award at this year’s conference.

Dr. Durbin, who also served as the event’s chair, attributed much of ISDS’ and CDS’ success to a unique strategy that targets future dentists years before they enter practice. By subsidizing their American Dental Student Association (ASDA) dues, ISDS and CDS provide students at all three dental schools in the state a free opportunity to participate in organized dentistry. They can experience the benefits and recognize the need to be actively involved in the profession.

“Illinois is unique across the country, and it has had a direct impact on recruiting students and new dentists into ADA membership,” Dr. Durbin said. Despite Illinois’ success, there is still more room for improvement, both at the state and national levels.

With over 22,000 dental students enrolled in the United States, 90% are student members of ASDA and the ADA. However, the current student-to-member dentist conversion rate is only 60%, a number that all agree needs to increase. Kathy Ridley, director of meetings and membership, presented a breakout session with ADA membership outreach manager, Chris Chico, on “Student to New Dentist – Gaining Perspective.” The session was held to increase awareness of the issues students and new dentist face, and how we as an association can meet their needs and identify opportunities to help them succeed. A panel of Illinois dental students was also on hand to answer questions.

ISDS is committed to being a leader in recruitment and retention efforts, and will continue its award-winning efforts in strengthening organized dentistry through increased membership.

