

# ILLINOIS DENTAL NEWS

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2015: The Road Ahead

# ISDS Meets with Members of Indian Dental Association

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The Illinois State Dental Society president and staff members had the pleasure to meet with members of the Indian Dental Association of Illinois (IDA-IL) on November 16, at Saffron of Westmont. The meeting's agenda was focused on increasing understanding of Medicaid expansion in Illinois, as well as establishing closer ties between the two groups.

"For the last few years, the ISDS presidents have wanted our organization to interact more with other ethnic, minority and women dental groups," said Greg Johnson, ISDS Executive Director. "We had gotten to know one of the members, Dr. Vishruti Patel, a past president of Indian Dental Association and ISDS member, and that relationship opened up an avenue for us to get together and share."

The Addison-based IDA-IL is part of an international organization that encourages dental professionals of Indian descent to participate in organized dentistry. The group partners with ISDS and the ADA on many initiatives and retains close ties to the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Dentistry to involve dental students and alumni in their advocacy initiatives.

Dionne Haney, ISDS Director Of Professional Services, presented "Healthcare Reforms and Effects on Dentistry," which reviewed the impacts of the Affordable Care Act. Topics included patient protection, small business tax credits, and the health insurance marketplace. Ms. Haney also explained changes to Medicaid managed care and the Medicare Opt-in/Opt-out requirement that stipulates that dentist have until June 1, 2015, in order for Medicaid beneficiaries to receive benefits.

Mr. Johnson provided IDA-IL members a summary of recent guidelines from the Illinois State Board of Dentistry, including an update on new rules and specialty exams. He also provided an overview of activities by DENT-IL-PAC and their work with state lawmakers to promote legislation favorable to Illinois dental professionals.

ISDS President Dr. Edward Segal kicked off the meeting by greeting attendees, and providing background on how our state dental society is structured and promoting opportunities for members to get involved with initiatives to better dentistry in Illinois. Dr. Segal also presided over a general question and answer period, and reiterated the importance of supporting organized dentistry through membership in groups such as IDA-IL and ISDS.

"Being a member of a minority dental group is wonderful. It blends well with membership in our state dental society," Dr. Segal said. "We see significant changes occurring in the dental profession that affects all dentists. Many of these changes are influenced by the lobbying efforts of special interest groups in Springfield. ISDS needs to be the leading voice of dentistry heard by the legislators. The ISDS keeps its strength by representing over 67 % of the dentists. When a dentist chooses not to be a member of ISDS they are actually weakening our voice."

Approximately 40 dentists were in attendance for the three-hour meeting.

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# Message to Students: We Have Your Back



While the official theme of the recent Success Seminar was “Field Trip to the Future,” perhaps the bigger message sent to attendees was, “We have your back,” according to Dr. Tom Sullivan, who presented at the November 5, seminar. Dr. Sullivan believes it is important that students understand that there is a network of supporting awaiting them as they transition from school into the dental profession.

“We have to be a resource for any question that they have about their future,” Dr. Sullivan said. “It has to be a little scary coming out of dental school with the debt load that they carry. I think that the best thing I can give them is hope. I can share my experiences, the good and bad decisions I’ve made, and reassure them that they are in a good place.”

Forty-five, fourth-year dental students from Southern Illinois University School of Dental Medicine traveled by charter bus to Springfield to take part in the annual seminar presented for their benefit. This year’s event was held at the Inn at 835.

The program provides students with information on ethics and practice management, and introduced them to the many resources available through ADA. Dr. Sullivan addressed several important topics that the students might be facing in the near future. These include locating, financing and marketing a dental practice, staff recruitment, leadership, managing patient expectations and dentist responsibilities, and real-life ethical situations that new dentists are likely to face.

“There is little to no education offered in dental school about how to run a small business,” he said. “We can help them the most by offering a mini Dental MBA, for lack of a better term, and guide them through the maze of decisions that they face right out of school.”

In addition to the success seminar, students were transported to the state Capitol for a tour. Lunch was then provided at the Governor’s Mansion where Dave Marsh, ISDS Director of Government Relations, recapped the results of the previous day’s statewide elections.

A reception later in the day back at the Inn at 835 provided students with an opportunity to network with ISDS members and staff.

“I was able to meet several dentists and others involved in ISDS. That was my favorite part,” said Mark Hobbie, a dental student from Hillsboro, Illinois. “I felt like a colleague, which was a very refreshing break from how a student normally feels.”

Mr. Hobbie said he enjoyed the lectures, delivered by Dr. Sullivan, on how to establish a successful dental practice. He also came away with an appreciation of the importance of turning to your peers for support, both personally, and for the good of the profession.

“For me, the most significant take-home point was the importance of organized dentistry,” he said. “Dr. Sullivan did a great job of explaining why it is so crucial to the profession, and he certainly convinced me to be as involved as I can.”

“Overall, it was a great experience and I hope that the program continues in the future.”

The Success Seminar will definitely continue on into the future, but under a different format. For the first time in 2015, the seminar will be held in conjunction with the Capital Conference scheduled in April.

Dr. Alice Boghosian, Capital Conference Chair, said the decision was made so that future dentists could learn, early on, about the importance of banding together to support the goals of dentistry in Illinois. It will also give the students a larger network of members with whom to meet.

“The students will be joining us in the morning when we go to the Capitol, and then in the afternoon they’ll break-off into their success seminar,” Dr. Boghosian said. “Then they’ll join us again for the evening reception. The more people we can bring on board, the better.”

# Sunset of Practice Act Tops Spring Agenda

The Illinois State Dental Society's spring legislative agenda will focus on extending the sunset date of the Dental Practice Act by working to include revisions that will reflect the current environment and better serve those practicing dentistry in the state of Illinois.

By statute, all practice acts administered by the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR) must be renewed every 10 years or face expiration. That sunset date for the Dental Practice Act is January 1, 2016, when it is set to repeal. ISDS staff has been working with IDFPR and will continue to do so until a bill is ready to send to lawmakers.

"The Department has some potential changes that they're suggesting. We have a number of changes that we'd like to see made to the Practice Act. We will meet together and come up with an agreed bill that we'll bring forward together. That is our main priority for 2015," said Dave Marsh, ISDS Director of Government Relations.

One notable legislative change that ISDS supports is a modification in the insurance code that will affect how insurance companies determine which dentists can be considered in-network providers for their group plans.

"In a nutshell, it will require insurance providers to update their plans and include only those dentists who are actively participating in their networks. You have these large dental groups that may have 50 to 100 dentists associated with their group, but not all of the dentists are actually located in the same geographical area in which the employer operates," said Mr. Marsh.

The problem arises when the list of in-network providers is frontloaded with the names of dentists who do not actually practice in the area. This is not only a disservice to the insured, who must wade through a long list to find a dentist within a convenient distance, but also to the dentists who are active in the geographic region of the company or organization whose employees are being served.

"It's basically a 'truth in advertising' proposal to make sure these networks are legitimate and that the dentists that are on the list are actually practicing in that area. It will be good for our members because a lot of them aren't in these large groups, and it will give them better exposure and access to patients," Mr. Marsh added.

To ensure that in-network lists remain legitimate over time, this legislation would stipulate that dentists be removed from the network if they haven't submitted a claim for payment in a 90-day period.

Another revision designed to protect dentists is being suggested in response to a bill passed last year that allows dentists to administer flu vaccines.

"Under this provision, dentists who are providing free mass immunizations at clinics or other public health events will be immune to liability. Hopefully, this will encourage more dentists to provide this critical service to communities in need around the state," he said.

Along with changes to the Practice Act, which will also include additional minor revisions, the spring agenda will address some ongoing issues.

"We anticipate that the dental hygienists will again propose a collaborative practice bill which ISDS will oppose," Mr. Marsh stated.

And there is one overriding issue that will likely loom large over everything that takes place at the Capitol in 2015.

"With the expiration of the temporary state income tax increase, we will obviously be watching the state budget very closely. Among other things, we want to make sure that the Medicaid funding for adult dental care that was restored last year remains in the budget," he said.



**Don't miss the ISDS  
Capital Conference on  
Wednesday, April 22, at  
the Hilton Springfield.  
Register Today at  
[www.isds.org](http://www.isds.org)!**



## Pearls of Wisdom... and Strands of Pearls

Camaraderie proved to be the top drawing card at the Finance and Fashion event held on November 8, at the ADA building in Chicago. In its third year, the event brought together female dentists from around the state to learn about the latest in financial strategies, along with the most up-to-date styles in dressing for success.

“I’ve attended in the past and it’s a great event, a chance to catch up with friends, make new friends, shop and even learn some important and helpful information,” said Dr. Lynse Briney of Chicago.

The event is co-sponsored by ADA, ISDS and CDS and featured expert speakers, along with many opportunities to network and reunite with old classmates and colleagues. Dr. Denise Hale of Palos Hills attended the event for the second year in a row, at the recommendation of several colleagues. She was especially impressed with this year’s financial speaker.

“I learned that the average age of a widow is 56 years old. That was an eye-opener. I won’t cancel my husband’s life insurance policy yet. The attorney also informed us of spousal support changes going into law in January, which were very enlightening,” Dr. Hale said.

Dr. Briney also found the speaker informative, and inspiring.

“I learned quite a lot,” Dr. Briney said. “Most of all it reminded me to keep on top of my finances. It motivated me to make some phone calls that I’ve been putting off. It was important information to have and it was presented in a fun way.”

In addition to the speakers, several vendors were on hand displaying their collections of jewelry, handbags and other accessories. A cosmetic company was also brought in to provide makeovers. To enhance attendees’ marketing efforts, a professional photographer took new headshots that could be uploaded to the Find a Dentist feature on the ISDS website.

Dr. Hale said that the Finance and Fashion event is especially important for female dentists who may not feel as comfortable at organized dentistry events that have a large male presence. Although she personally feels at home among her male colleagues at branch meetings, Hale also benefits from a chance to get together with more of her female peers.

“My professional life is so enriched by the connections I’ve made with colleagues,” Dr. Hale said. “My female counterparts who are



also wives and mothers share a special bond as well. We can laugh and talk about our unique challenges, playing so many roles for so many people. It’s a definite stress reliever. We can also encourage the young dentists who may be wondering if they can ‘do it all’.”

Both Drs. Hale and Briney said that they plan to attend the Finance and Fashion event in the future, and that they’ll encourage their colleagues to do the same.

“I feel that if more female dentists would connect then they’d feel more comfortable to attend branch and society events,” Dr. Hale said. “Once you begin to bond with your colleagues you are never alone at any events, there is always someone you know and can have a laugh.”

# Preview of CapCon 2015: Commitment to Care

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The 2015 ISDS Capital Conference is set for April 22 at the downtown Hilton in Springfield, and members are encouraged to make plans now to attend. This annual event is a great opportunity to demonstrate to lawmakers and government leaders that dental professionals are committed to improving dental care for everyone in Illinois.

“This event is designed to bring our message to the legislators. We want Springfield to see the faces and hear the voices of dentists. The leader of dental care is the dentist,” said Dr. Edward Segal, ISDS president.

This year’s theme is “Commitment to Care.” Making oral health a priority and accessible throughout society are topics that will be addressed by scheduled speakers, including ADA President Dr. Maxine Feinberg.

Once again, a full day of activities is planned for the conference, which is free to attend for the first time. A pre-meeting seminar on how to engage your legislator will be held, followed by a breakfast and a legislative briefing. Attendees will then be bused to the statehouse where they will meet with legislators and engage them on issues that are critical to both dental professionals and the citizens of Illinois.

“The first Capital Conference I attended, I was in awe,” said Dr. Alice Boghosian, who is chairing this year’s event. “When you speak with a legislator and try to help them to understand our profession and the challenges that we face, you begin to see how uninformed some of them can be. But how can we expect them to be informed unless we are the ones telling them.”

One of the key issues that Dr. Segal wants to bring to the forefront is the need to develop a protocol for diverting patients away from emergency rooms and towards private practices or dental clinics. Such a plan would not only improve the level of care that the patient receives, but will do so at a significantly reduced cost.

“When a patient goes for treatment to the emergency room, they only get palliative care. They may get a pain prescription or an antibiotic, but the cause of the pain is not addressed. So the problem is only dealt with until the next time it flares up. And the taxpayers are paying for expensive emergency room time and we have a better solution,” Dr. Segal said.



Another key issue is establishing community dental health coordinators throughout the state to assist citizens in navigating the healthcare system.

“It’s a great opportunity for a caring individual to help Illinois residents who are in need of dental care to find government assistance,” Dr. Segal said.

Members will also be asked to take up the flag for the next generation of dentists and helping to reduce the financial burden placed upon them by advocating for ways to manage education debt and to establish reasonable loan repayment options. Third-year dental students from Southern Illinois University will be invited to attend as part of their Success Seminar, which will also provide members the opportunity to mentor their future colleagues.

Although the event is free, members are encouraged to register early so that the proper arrangements can be made for meals and other accommodations. Members will receive an e-mail reminder just prior to the registration opening in February. A strong showing is critical for improving oral health in Illinois, and for improving the state of the dental profession.

“There are issues and challenges that we face in our profession as a whole. The actions that can be taken when we band together and engage our legislators can be enormous in terms of strength of numbers,” Dr. Boghosian said.