Dental care for persons with intellectual disabilities and other special health care needs

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Dr. Daniel Albert received his DDS and the university medal for dentistry from Dalhousie University. He is a general dentist in Bedford, Nova Scotia who dedicates part of his practice to the treatment of adults with special needs and is a referral dentist for mentally and medically challenged patients who require oral or IV sedation and for anxious patients who require oral sedation.

Dr. Heather Carr received her DDS and the university medal for dentistry from Dalhousie University. She is a general dentist and partner at Atlantic Dental Centre in Halifax, Nova Scotia, the NSDA representative for the Canadian Dental Association (CDA) Board and CDSPI, and chairs the CDA National Coordinating Working Group on Access to Care and the CDA Practice Success Task Force.

Dr. Tracy Doyle received her DDS from Dalhousie University, completed a dental residency program at SickKids in Toronto, and received a MSc in paediatric dentistry from the University of Toronto. She is the director of the Dalhousie paediatric dentistry undergraduate curriculum and the associate chief of dentistry at the IWK Health Centre.

Dr. Evan Shaw received his DMD degree from the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine and his certificate in paediatric dentistry from the Harvard School of Dental Medicine/Boston Children’s Hospital. He is director of the IWK/Dalhousie paediatric general practice residency and an associate professor in paediatric dentistry.

COURSE OUTLINE

Oral health care is one of the top unmet health care needs among both paediatric and adult with special needs, including those with intellectual disabilities. A significant percentage do not have a dental home and are at an increased risk for dental caries, periodontitis, and poor oral hygiene.

Cost, fear and anxiety, a lack of perceived need for dental care, and a shortage of practitioners willing to treat the special needs population are just some of the barriers to care. Many practitioners do not receive any education on treating individuals with special needs in their undergraduate dentistry curriculum or gain clinical experience in this area.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the end of this course, participants will know more about:

- Initiatives to promote good relationships between dental practitioners and individuals with special needs
- CDA strategies around access to care
- Dentists’ perspectives on providing dental care to individuals with special needs
- Practical tips to improve special needs care in the dental office