

ALUMNI ANCHOR

2021 | 2022



Dal president visits the GAP Oral Health Clinic

Caring for new immigrants and refugees

+ Part-time
BDH degree
opens new
doors

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should know
about Lyme
disease

A path into oral
health care for
African Nova
Scotians

North Preston
Dental Clinic
cares for its
community



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Masthead

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Alumni Anchor is published annually for alumni and friends of Dalhousie University's Faculty of Dentistry. Circulation: 3,700

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Alumni Anchor is published by Metro Guide Publishing
Publisher: Fred Fiander
Senior Director Creative Design and Production: Shawn Dalton
Production Coordinator: Nicole McNeil
Graphic Designers: Roxanna Boers
Advertising Sales: publishers@metroguide.ca

MGP | METROGUIDE PUBLISHING

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Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement
No. 40064799

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10



19



20



22



On our cover: Susan Keating-Bekkers (DDH'91) and dentistry dean Dr. Ben Davis welcome Dr. Deep Saini to the new immigrant and refugee oral health clinic. Dr. Saini wears his new clinic jacket.

Do you receive more than one *Alumni Anchor* magazine at your home or office? If you would prefer not to, please contact us at alumni.dentistry@dal.ca. It will help us all to be more environmentally friendly.

ALUMNI ANCHOR



Dean's message

I remember struggling to fly home from a meeting at one of our partner schools in Malaysia in March 2020 because of a new disease called COVID-19. Who would have guessed that nearly two years later we would still be adjusting our lives and practices as a result?

I am sure we are all grateful to be able to care for our patients, but I think it is safe to say that we are all exhausted by the many challenges and changes the pandemic has forced upon us. While I don't believe we will ever eliminate COVID, I feel we are slowly learning to lead more normal lives and exist with the virus.

In the Faculty of Dentistry, we enjoyed a relatively normal beginning to the autumn term. We welcomed new and returning students at the end of the summer and classes and labs have taken place in person. Faculty and staff have been able to work in the Dentistry Building, including our researchers.

We have learned many things from the pandemic, one of the most useful being how to hold online and hybrid events. In March we were very proud to welcome Dr. Deep Saini, the president of Dalhousie, and his wife Rani for an in-person tour of our immigrant and refugee clinic. We also held a highly successful online Research in Oral Health evening with

judges from all over North America and beyond taking part.

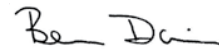
Unfortunately, the university was once again forced to hold virtual Convocation ceremonies. We pulled together an online event that allowed family, friends, staff, and faculty to celebrate the accomplishments of our newest graduates and hear Moe Alshateel (DDS'21) and Meghan Nazer (DDH'21) give inspirational valedictorian addresses (watch these on our YouTube channel).

Homecoming celebrations took place in September, including an in-person White Coat ceremony and CE sessions, and an online JD McLean lecture presented by Rick Guidotti. It was a far cry from what we know to be normal, but we were delighted to be able to

bring so many of our community together, even if we couldn't be in the same room.

We hope to hold alumni events in the months ahead, but as we have all learned, plans often need to change at the last minute. We'll do our best to keep you updated through *The Current* and on social media. You can also refer to the events calendar in the alumni section of the website.

Until next time, keep doing what you are doing to look after your patients and please stay safe yourselves.



Ben Davis
Dean, Faculty of Dentistry

Dentistry Alumni Committee Update 2021/22

It has been a unique and difficult year for our profession. We have had to respond and adapt to changing provincial health requirements and, at the same time, still provide care to our patients. The Faculty of Dentistry and the Dentistry Alumni Committee have been making adjustments along with you.

The DAC decided to postpone the Faculty's Homecoming 2020 celebrations until 2021 in the interests of keeping everyone safe. This spring, we sent off the graduating Class of 2021 with virtual celebrations and well wishes, rather than the traditional convocation ceremony we had hoped might be possible.

We plan to invite the classes of 2020 and 2021 and alumni back to campus to celebrate the graduates from those classes in person once we are able to.

As a result of the pandemic, normal changes to the DAC executive have been delayed. Dr. Lee Erickson's term as chair of the DAC has been extended. Current vice-chair Denise Zwicker will take over as chair later this year. Mohammad Alshateel and Megan Hynes graduated this spring and completed their terms as student representatives. Mohammad AlAbdoulalam (DDS'24) is now the voice for dentistry students while Lindsey Cavanagh, (DDH'22), is the representative for dental hygiene.

In the fall of 2020, we presented an

Outstanding Alumni Award posthumously to Dr. Eric Hatfield (DDS'86). His sister Jennifer, who works in the Faculty as a dental assistant, received the plaque on his behalf. This past summer, we were delighted to announce that DDS4 student Gavin Raddall was the first recipient of the Dr. Eric Hatfield Participation Award. In October 2021 we presented an Outstanding Alumni Award to Kelly Mabey Antosh (DDH'94).

Thank you for keeping in touch with your Dalhousie Faculty of Dentistry. We look forward to welcoming you back to campus with more alumni events this year. Stay tuned for announcements. ⚡

Continuing Education In-person Events

FRIDAY, APRIL 1, 2022 | 9:00 AM TO 4:00 PM | 3.0 LECTURE AND 3.0 HANDS-ON HOURS

Medical emergencies with hands-on session – Certification course

Presenters: Dr. Chris Lee, Dr. Laurel Murphy, and Darryl Chickness

FRIDAY, APRIL 22, 2022 | 8:00 AM TO 3:00 PM | 6.0 LECTURE HOURS

Focusing on the details! Achieving precision restorative dentistry with evidence-based protocols

Presenter: Dr. Alan Atlas

SATURDAY, APRIL 23, 2022 | 8:30 TO 11:30 AM |

3.0 HANDS-ON HOURS

Good to GREAT! Evidence-based protocols for mastering adhesion and posterior composites

Presenter: Dr. Alan Atlas

Other courses to watch for:

CBCT – Certification course, MARCH 2022

Nitrous oxide sedation – Certification course, APRIL 2022

If interested in either of these courses, contact the CDE office to be added to the waitlist.

Research in Oral Health (RIOH) PRESENTATION SHOWCASE

(formerly known as table clinics)

PLEASE JOIN US FOR A SHOWCASE OF STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH

- Table Clinics has been renamed Research in Oral Health (RIOH) to emphasize state-of-the-art scholarship and evidence-based dentistry principles
- Attend our virtual event from anywhere
- Enjoy both dentistry and dental hygiene presentations
- Talk to students about their research
- Get two hours of free CE credits
- Live presentations will be made available on YouTube for later viewing

Friday, March 25, 2022 | LIVE EVENT 4:00 TO 8:00 PM
dal.ca/dentistry/cde for updates

ACDE Webinar Series

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2022 | 12:00 TO 2:00 PM | 2.0 HOURS

Systemic factors affecting pain experience

Presenter: Dr. Davis Thomas

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2022 | 12:00 TO 1:30 PM | 1.5 HOURS

Current concepts in dental sleep medicine

Presenter: Dr. Isabel Moreno-Hay

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2022 | 9:00 TO 10:30 PM | 1.5 HOURS

Implicit bias in dentistry: What we don't think we think

Presenter: Dr. Shaista Rashid

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2022 | 12:00 TO 2:00 PM | 2.0 HOURS

Advanced multi-disciplinary uses of CBCT technology

Presenter: Dr. Jeffrey Price

SATURDAY, MARCH 5, 2022 | 12:00 TO 2:00 PM | 2.0 HOURS

Common lesions of the oral cavity and their management

Presenter: Dr. Paras Patel

MONDAY, MARCH 7, 2022 | 9:00 TO 10:00 PM | 1.0 HOUR

Trigeminal nerve injuries in dentistry

Presenter: Dr. Vincent Ziccardi

SATURDAY, MARCH 12, 2022 | 12:00 TO 2:00 PM | 2.0 HOURS

Laser applications for the dental hygienist

Presenter: Dr. Nancy Fitzgerald

TUESDAY, MARCH 15, 2022 | 9:00 TO 10:00 PM | 1.0 HOUR

The oral-systemic connection – an update

Presenter: Dr. Frank Scannapieco

THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2022 | 9:00 TO 11:00 PM | 2.0 HOURS

Minimally invasive dentistry based on evidence

Presenter: Dr. Anuradha Prakkhi



The ACDE and 31 of its member schools are jointly providing this series of live webinars featuring university-based key opinion leaders.

More courses are always being added.

Visit dal.ca/dentistry/cde for updates or follow us:

[daldent_ce](https://www.instagram.com/daldent_ce)

Dalhousie Dentistry Continuing Education

HOW TO REGISTER

To register, visit dal.ca/dentistry/cde and follow the registration link for each course.

If you require any assistance, contact the CDE office at cde.dentistry@dal.ca.

Top dentistry award goes to Debby Chao

Debby Chao was “surprised and honoured” to hear that she is the recipient of the 2021 Dr. David Precious Gold Medal in Dentistry. The award caps off four years of dental school during which Debby achieved top marks in her class. She graduated with distinction and five additional awards.

Born in Taiwan, Debby came to Nova Scotia to go to high school and knew then that she wanted to be a dentist. Her parents are health-care professionals and she always enjoyed her trips to the dentist and orthodontist.

Debby studied for a BSc with honours in microbiology and immunology at Dal, which fueled an interest in antibiotics and antimicrobial stewardship. She was accepted into the dentistry program when she finished her undergrad degree.

“I like all aspects of dentistry,” says Debby, “It gives you a lot of variety in a day, plus there is the hands-on aspect.” She particularly enjoys patient interaction. “You learn a lot from people by listening to their stories.”

Debby has returned to the Faculty for another year as a general practice resident. “I want to gain advanced skills and knowledge. Maybe an interest in a speciality will emerge, but right now I like the idea of being able to do many things.”



2021 Student Impact Award winner: Rebecca Marr

Rebecca Marr (DDS'22) was the recipient of the 2021 Faculty of Dentistry Dalhousie University Student Impact Award this spring.

This is a second Impact Award for Rebecca. She received a Residence Life Award at the 2018 ceremony. On that evening, she watched as Lindsay James (DDS'19) was presented with the Impact Award for the Faculty of Dentistry.

“I remember thinking how wonderful it must be to have your own Faculty acknowledge your contributions,” says Rebecca. “To receive the same award this year was a full circle moment for me.”

Rebecca has been a social representative for the dentistry class of 2022, served as vice president and then president of the DDSS, and managed Live@5. She has also been a loyal volunteer with the Because Everyone's Ability Matters (BEAM) program, “For the Health of It,” and the Dalhousie Dentistry Admissions Committee. As Christmas 2020 approached, she arranged for a holiday meal to be provided to the 75+ students and their families who could not go home.

Speaking of Rebecca's achievements, Dr. Ben Davis said, “Rebecca is diligent in her studies, dedicated to her patients, empathetic and supportive of her peers, and always willing to lend a hand.”

RIOH: The new Table Clinics

The 51st annual student presentations showcase took place virtually on March 26, 2021. Formerly known as Table Clinics, this event now falls under the banner of the Research In Oral Health (RIOH) Student Presentations Showcase. The name was changed to reflect a renewed focus on evidence-based oral health research for both dentistry and dental hygiene students.

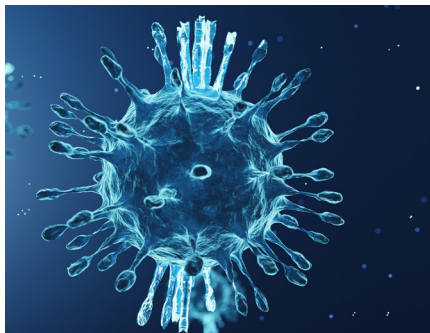
The dentistry winner for original research was Hannah MacDonald with her topic, “Exploring the role of pharmacists in supporting oral health in Nova Scotia,” Victoria Parsons took first place for dentistry with “Oral cancer screening: An updated literature review on breaking the time barrier,” and Erin Metzler, Meghan Nazer, Trisha Robichaud, and Georgia Stangeland received the dental hygiene first prize for their presentation, “Beyond the snore: Exploring the oral health implications in patients with sleep apnea.”

For more information about the RIOH Student Presentations Showcase, please go to: dal.ca/daldentistry/rioh.



PHOTO: PAIGE CONRAD

New COVID-19 study at Canadian dental schools



Last spring, the Faculty of Dentistry began participating in a 10-month, \$1.4-million study that the federal COVID-19 Immunity Task Force announced at the end of February. Drs. Leigha Rock and Mary McNally are the co-lead investigators at Dalhousie and Dr. Paul Allison of McGill University is the principal investigator for the overall project.

Infection rates, transmission risks, immune system responses, and the impact of vaccines among dental school faculty, staff and students at the 10 Canadian dental schools are being

investigated as part of this study. The aim is to identify and analyze the occupational risks associated with the SARS-CoV-2 virus in the dental school setting,

The 10 Canadian dental schools each recruited 80 people — faculty, staff, and students — to participate. Every month, they provide saliva samples that are tested for the presence of SARS-CoV-2. A small, nested study, which includes the collection of dried blood samples for the analysis of SARS-CoV-2 antibody development following participants' first vaccination, is also part of the study.

"The overwhelming enthusiasm from Dalhousie's participants in their consent of salivary and dried blood samples exceeded recruitment aims," says research assistant Lindsay MacDonald.

The study ends in March 2022.

New faculty members

We welcomed two new faculty members in the summer of 2021. Dr. Violet D'Souza is a dental public health specialist and she has joined the Dental Clinical Sciences Department as an assistant professor, while chemical engineer Dr. Locke Davenport Huyer joined the Department of Applied Oral Sciences as an assistant professor.



Dr. Violet D'Souza



Dr. Locke Davenport Huyer

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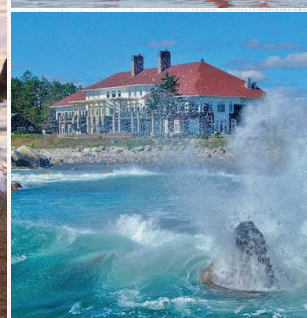
New Brunswick
Dental Society
Société Dentaire du
Nouveau-Brunswick





Dr. Sachin Seth (BSc'96, DDS'00) was the Faculty of Dentistry favourite in the 2018 season of the *Great Canadian Baking Show*. He baked his way to the show's final episode but didn't quite take the cake in the end. In December he did, becoming top baker on the *Great Canadian Holiday Baking Show*!

Something to smile about,
all year round.



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Dr. Deep Saini with Dr. Ben Davis, dean of the Faculty of Dentistry, and Dr. Leigha Rock, director of the School of Dental Hygiene

PHOTO: DANNY ABRIEL

MEETING THE NEEDS OF NEW IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES TO NS President Saini visits the GAP clinic

By Cheryl Bell

Dalhousie University president Dr. Deep Saini and his wife Rani arrived at the Faculty of Dentistry on a wet and windy evening at the end of March. The purpose of their visit was to see the Government Assisted Populations (GAP) Oral Health Clinic in action and meet some of the faculty members, volunteers, and students who dedicate their time to it.

Over the past 10 years, the GAP clinic has grown and changed its name, but its central purpose has remained the same: to provide oral health care to new immigrants to Nova Scotia, many of whom have led difficult lives before arriving here and who would struggle to find care in Nova Scotia, mostly due to financial and language barriers.

The Sainis saw the clinic on a typical Monday evening. As dental hygiene and dentistry students dressed in scrubs and clinic jackets bent over patients in white, well-lit cubicles, instructors supervised and answered questions and language interpreters facilitated oral health-care conversations between patients and the students treating them.

“What I saw at the clinic exceeded my most positive expectations,” Dr. Saini said after his tour. He was impressed by the facilities and equipment and the work of students, clinicians, and volunteers to treat “waves of refugees and new immigrants who had either never seen a dental professional or would simply not have the means to do it now.”

AN EXCEPTIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR STUDENTS

Prof. Heather Doucette, director of the GAP clinic, explains that the clinic is currently treating a large number of Syrian refugees, many of whom have had some dental treatment in their home country, compared to many patients from African populations who have never had access to care and so suffer from “rampant decay.”

According to Doucette, a key component of the GAP clinic involves the students working with a language interpreter to provide care to patients whose primary language is not English.

Working this way provides students with knowledge and experience they can carry forward into their professional practice.

“My hope is that this experience will help to increase our students’ ability to treat these populations in a culturally competent manner after they have graduated.”

SUSAN KEATING-BEKKERS: ALUMNA, FACULTY MEMBER, VOLUNTEER, AND DONOR

Dr. Saini commended the “passionate involvement and generosity” of Susan Keating-Bekkers (DDH’91) which was “behind a lot of what we saw.”

A part-time faculty member for 20 years and now a volunteer in the GAP clinic, Keating-Bekkers became aware of both the extensive needs of the new immigrant and refugee populations and the difficulties the clinic had in obtaining consistent funding for treatment costs.

She initially created a fund to support dental hygiene care, but quickly saw that

many patients also needed extractions and restorations. That was why she created a second fund to enable dental students to provide care in the clinic as well. The addition of dental students was “critical,” she says in the provision of “much-needed dental procedures.”

As the number of immigrants and refugees has grown, “this continuously evolving clinic has improved the lives of hundreds of individuals who are new to our province,” she says.

Close to 500 patients have received treatment through the GAP clinic so far, with more than 260 dental hygiene students and over 160 dentistry students providing the care.

Like Keating-Bekkers, Doucette is aware that the constant evolution of the clinic creates new needs and they each continue to try to find new ways to extend the work of the GAP clinic, so that more patients receive more care.

“Over the past several years, Heather Doucette has been a driving force behind the GAP clinic,” says Keating-Bekkers. “Through her leadership, she has worked with the Faculty to include the dentistry students, which has taken this clinic to a whole new level of oral health care.”

For Dr. Saini, the GAP clinic powerfully demonstrates how Dalhousie can fulfil its civic role within our community. “The multitude of outreach programs that our Faculty of Dentistry runs has stood out as exemplary. Our GAP clinic is one of the leading examples among these.”[‡]



PHOTO: DANNY ABRIEL

Dr. Saini visits the clinic for immigrants and refugees

“What I saw at the clinic exceeded my most positive expectations,” — Dr. Deep Saini



PHOTO: DANNY ABRIEL

Susan Keating-Bekkers (DDH'91) and Dr. Saini greet each other. Prof. Heather Doucette (left) and Dr. Ben Davis look on.

HOMEcoming EVENTS

September 22–24, 2022 | In-person & virtual events

- White coat ceremony
- JD McLean lecture
- Outstanding alumni awards
- Full day of continuing education courses on Saturday, September 24, 2022 (in-person)

Registration will open July 2022 at:
dal.ca/dentistry/cde



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PHOTO: DANNY ABRIEL

MOHAMMAD ALSHATEEL

A process of alchemy

By Cheryl Bell

Mohammad (Moe) Alshateel (DDS'21) arrived in Calgary from his home in Kuwait, aged 18, on Christmas Eve in the middle of snowstorm, with plans to become a doctor. Last summer, he flew home from Halifax, aged 28, a dentist.

During his 10 years in Canada, Moe underwent a process of alchemy that has not only redirected his career ambitions, but transformed him, too.

"The person who went to Calgary in 2012 is not the same person who came to Halifax in 2014, is not the same person who got into dentistry in 2017, and is definitely not the same person who graduated in 2021," he says. "I think — I hope — I have grown up to be better than I was."

FROM KUWAIT TO CANADA

Moe explains that he is one of the "lucky people" who came to Canada from Kuwait on a scholarship. But not everything went as planned. After high school, he hoped to study medicine in either the U.S. or the U.K., but he was matched with the University of Calgary where he enrolled in the Bachelor of Health Sciences program.

Unfortunately, the program wasn't a good fit. "I told the folks who are in charge of the program that I didn't think it was what I

wanted. They suggested studying dentistry at Dalhousie. So that's how I ended up in Halifax in 2014 — also at Christmastime."

He finished off a BSc in chemistry at Dalhousie before applying to study dentistry, meeting one of his dentistry classmates, Ammar Yassin, during a couple of his chemistry classes. "I actually persuaded him to apply for dentistry, too," says Moe.

Before officially arriving in the Dentistry Building as a dental student, Moe volunteered as an interpreter in the Government Assisted Populations (GAP) Oral Health Clinic, which treats new immigrants and refugees to Nova Scotia.

"Through knowing another language I was able to be the bridge between the patients and the dental hygienists who were treating them, explaining treatments and procedures," says Moe. "Now that I'm on the other side, as someone who treats patients, I feel what an honour and a privilege it was to be one of the few people in the clinic speaking to those patients and helping them feel more comfortable."

"The ability to connect with folks is just satisfying. I would do it for the hugs — back when we could hug each other."

LEARNING THE LANGUAGE OF DENTISTRY

"It's crazy to think the four years have passed so quickly," says Moe. What started with a call to his mother to tell her he had been accepted into the dentistry program quickly transitioned to drilling on a block in the lab. "I keep reminding myself now that no matter how bad things go in clinic, I started by drilling on that block."

The skills and techniques that seemed difficult at first did — as the instructors said they would — come with practice, as well as the mindset of being a professional. "Now here I am explaining treatments to patients and doing restorations," he says.

Moe credits dentistry with teaching him how to talk to people and put them at their ease — although occasionally encountering a patient who is resistant to his charms.

"A 93-year-old patient once told me I talk too much. 'Why don't you just work?' she asked me. I said 'OK, sure' and put in the rubber dam. I kept humming along with the music. After I finished the restoration and thanked her for coming in, the dental assistant told me that the patient complimented me at the front desk. 'I didn't know dentists could be happy and humming and singing,' she said. I'll take it, Moe says with his trademark grin."

Moe admits that he can talk a lot, particularly when he feels awkward. But he has learned the value of listening, not only to patients, but to instructors. "With every interaction, you pick up a little tip, another way of doing something, like using a different instrument or angling it another way to deal with a particular situation. I have learned so much this way and it is awesome."



PHOTO: DANNY ABRIEL

ALWAYS READY TO VOLUNTEER

A big part of Moe's student experience at Dal has been volunteering, first with Dal Out and the farmers' market, and then in the GAP clinic.

"It's all about interacting with other people for me, whether it's helping someone to feel comfortable or selling them a vegetable," he says. "The ability to connect with folks is just satisfying. I would do it for the hugs — back when we could hug each other."

The volunteering didn't stop. As a dentistry student, he continued to serve as an interpreter in the GAP clinic, then took on responsibility for scheduling the students, as well as providing clinical care in years three and four.

When he first started volunteering in the GAP clinic as an undergrad, Moe admits he didn't know about "dentistry stuff," like fluoride varnish and caries. But through listening, watching, and translating, he became familiar with the terminology and the procedures.

Moe struggles to remember all the volunteering activities he has participated in, but his Impact Award win in 2020 fills in some of the blanks: student representative on the Dentistry Alumni Committee, student communications representative in the Faculty, Multicultural Food Day, one of the social reps for his class.

He says his volunteering all "mooshes together." It's hard to separate one activity from another. By way of an explanation, Moe says that there is an Arabic expression that literally translates to "you do good and you throw it in the sea," which means don't expect anything back.

"I believe that what goes around comes around. You treat people the way you want to be treated. What you get back is deserved," he says.

Even though Moe describes himself as "really very shy," everyone in the Faculty of Dentistry knows him. He has made many friends from all over the world — from Maine,

Utah, and Colorado, to Malaysia and New Zealand — and been able to tour the Cabot Trail and Newfoundland with classmates, Maggie McCarvill and Jared Crane.

While he is excited to see how Kuwait has changed in the last 10 years and to reconnect with his family, he describes the return home as bittersweet. "Canada is an amazing place and I love the environment Dal has created. I feel like I found my chosen family away from home."

In the back of his head Moe says he has an idea that he will eventually return to Nova Scotia to study for a Master of Education so that he can teach and pass on the tips and tricks his instructors shared with him.

"It's not selfish to keep what you know to yourself, it's just better shared," says Moe. "Part of you lives on with someone else. You have an influence on people around you that you don't always realize, whether it's as a dentist or instructor, or as a human being." †



NEW PRESIDENT ANNOUNCEMENT

Dr. Heather Veysey, a Moncton general dentist, was elected as the President of the New Brunswick Dental Society (NBDS) at the Annual General Meeting, which was held virtually on Saturday, June 12, 2021.

Dr. Veysey began her career at Dalhousie as a Dental Hygiene graduate in 1987. She then went on to get her DDS (Doctor of Dental Surgery) degree in 1992. She has been practicing at the Family Dental Moncton clinic with her husband, Dr. Kevin Ingham for the past 29 years.



JENNIFER JOHNSON

On track for a new career

By Cheryl Bell

Jennifer Johnson (DDH'21) maintains that repairing excavators and rock trucks and working as a dental hygienist are not as different as one might initially think. She should know: she was a heavy equipment technician apprentice before deciding to study dental hygiene at Dalhousie.

"There are actually a lot of transferrable skills," she says, "like problem-solving, hands-on working, and operating in tight quarters."

Jennifer admits that heavy equipment maintenance provided her with a good job at Toromont Cat in Dartmouth and it was the beginning of a promising career. But there was a "missing puzzle piece."

THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

Originally from New Glasgow, Jennifer went to NSCC Pictou to study for a diploma in heavy duty transport repair. "I wasn't exactly sure what to do when I left high school, but I knew I wanted to do something hands-on and educationally challenging. And there was a lot of problem solving with that career."

The moment of truth came when Jennifer asked herself what was missing. And the answer was working with people and enjoying relationships with them.

The health professions, and specifically dental hygiene, had appealed to her for some time. "I feel that dental hygiene is a field where there is an opportunity for growth and expansion. I think the career is developing and going through a transformation at this moment."



PHOTO: NICK PEARCE

"Clinic is where you get to interact with patients and apply your knowledge base."

With her eye on the goal, Jennifer set about achieving it. "Believe it or not," she says, "Dalhousie does not take any transfer credits from the technician program I was in previously. Apparently, there is no 'Fixing big machines 101' or anything like that offered at Dal."

Although Jennifer jokes about the position she found herself in when she decided to pursue dental hygiene as a new career, "starting from the bottom again" was not easy. She attended Dal in the 2018-19 academic year to take all the prerequisites she needed to be able to study dental hygiene. She focused on the sciences, adding in two terms of Greek mythology to fulfil the language requirements.

WHAT DID I DO?

"At the end of my first week at Dal, I was thinking 'What did I do?' I left a very good job. I left a very good career." But she quickly realized she had made the right choice.

In the autumn of 2019, Jennifer's dental hygiene studies began in earnest. First semester gave her the "typical dental hygiene experience of sim lab and looking forward to patient care." So far, so normal. But in March 2020, everything came to a "dead stop." COVID-19 had arrived.

"We all thought the pandemic would affect us for a couple of weeks," says Jennifer, "but we know how that turned out." She appreciates how difficult it was for the professors who had to "adapt and pivot so many times" over the past year. And while online learning presented challenges, it had some bonuses as well, she says.

Typically, Jennifer would commute into the Dentistry Building from her home in East Hants each day. "Normally, we had to be in the building from 8:00 a.m. until around 5:00. So I enjoyed the new flexibility that online learning offered."

What is the best part of dental hygiene school for her? "I have to say clinic is my favourite — which is probably a good sign! It's the whole point of what you're doing, isn't it? It's where you get to interact with patients and apply your knowledge base."

Even though studying dental hygiene involves a lot of courses — and a comparable number of midterms — Jennifer feels that every course and every lab she did was building a base for her clinical skills.

That doesn't mean that treating her first patient wasn't nerve-racking. "I think that until you have practice doing it, there's no way



PHOTO: NICK PEARCE

you're not going to feel a little nervous. But I knew those early appointments were the start of getting good at doing what I do."

What Jennifer also found gratifying was having patients notice how much faster and better she had become. In addition, there were the clinical changes that Jennifer could see in her patients' mouths when they tried out the techniques she had suggested to them.

Through the difficult months of COVID-19, Jennifer feels that she had the support of both her classmates and faculty members. No one makes it through dental hygiene school alone, she says.

Faculty members were particularly supportive, Jennifer maintains. "There is a strong culture of continuing development and education that they bring to the table. They lead by example by constantly improving their skills and they give us a lot of personalized feedback. They also get to know us as people over our two years in the program, which is really, really nice."



PHOTO: NICK PEARCE

WIDER ROLES FOR DENTAL HYGIENISTS

The feeling that the dental hygiene profession is changing and developing — which attracted Jennifer to it in the first place — continues to guide her next steps. She believes there is a growing awareness that the oral cavity is connected to the rest of the body and that poor oral health has a major impact on overall health.

"Thanks to our professors, we have rotations in schools, hospitals, and outreach clinics," says Jennifer. "That experience is helping to expand our role as dental hygienists and change the dynamic of simply working for a dentist in a private practice to expanding our role out into the community."

Jennifer's next step is working at Dr. Kohli Dental Clinic in Carbonear, N.L., owned by Dr. Kash Kohli (DDS'18). At some point, she

plans to return to Dalhousie to study for a Bachelor of Dental Hygiene (BDH), potentially through the new part-time program.

"Going to work before returning for further studies is important to me. It will give me an opportunity to see a bit more of what's out there, because we can't experience every scenario at Dal. But then it would be great to return to do the BDH and explore the wider roles available to us as dental hygienists." ✦

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**MICHELINE JAMAEI AND
CATHERINE MURPHY**

From nursing to dentistry

By Cheryl Bell

When Catherine Murphy (DDS'21) heard that another registered nurse had applied for the dentistry program, her first thought was one of dismay. She thought it was highly unlikely they would both be accepted.

But that's not how this story goes. Both Catherine and Micheline Jamael (DDS'21) were accepted into the program, met on the first day of classes, and quickly became best friends.

RETURNING TO THE CLASSROOM

Catherine and Micheline went into nursing knowing that the health-care world was the right place for them. They wanted to help people in a hands-on role in the community. Nursing ticked all those boxes. After graduating, Catherine worked in the Pediatric Medical Unit at the IWK Health Centre in Halifax and Micheline in the emergency department at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital in Sydney.

At the back of both their minds, however, was the feeling that there was a different health-care role waiting for them. For Catherine, who had seen her mother study for a masters and a PhD in nursing, there was a sense that you could "do many different things" with a nursing qualification.

She considered medical school and becoming

a nurse practitioner, but dentistry appealed because it was "a good mix of going back to get a higher level of education and being able to work directly in the community helping people."

Micheline always wanted to be a dentist. "I was one of those strange kids who loved going to the dentist. I was fascinated by the drills."

She studied nursing because it offered her a role in health care. But the dentistry dream didn't go away and Micheline knew she would regret it if she didn't try. She dropped back to part-time at the hospital and returned to university to get the credits she needed for dental school. "I did well in the end, but I definitely worked hard," she says.

Catherine also returned to university – while continuing to work at the hospital – to pick up the prerequisites she needed. "I was back in first-year science courses with 18-year-olds and there were many moments when I wondered if it would all be worth it."

SOME THINGS WERE FAMILIAR, SOME WERE NOT

Once they entered the dentistry program they both found they had a lot of knowledge and skills that carried over into their dentistry training. Anatomy and pharmacology were all familiar territory, and their skills in inserting IVs, dressing and managing wounds, carrying out sterile procedures, charting, and communicating with patients were also useful.

Even so, studying dentistry was still a big change. "In first and second year we were working on plastic teeth for the first time and there were a lot of competencies we had to pass," explains Catherine. "For a lot of us, we had to learn to fail for the first time – and to stop seeing it as failure. It was just part of the process of learning new skills, like falling down when you're learning to ski."

For Micheline, her nursing experience made communicating with patients and administering local anaesthetic easy. What was more difficult was getting used to the drill and other hands-on skills, plus learning a new

language of dentistry. "The whole scope of dentistry and its terminology was completely new to me," she says, "and not something we would learn in nursing."

She feels there is a need for more education and oral health care promotion in nursing. "In the emergency department, oral health is unfortunately not a top priority, but in nursing generally there needs to be a greater awareness of its connection to other health conditions, such as diabetes."

Catherine and Micheline say that their shared background created a bond between them right from the start. "We were just drawn together," says Catherine, "and studied for every exam together. I don't think I could have done it without her."

What they didn't anticipate was the closeness of the whole class. Early in their first year, Dr. Ferne Kraglund told them they would "leave as family." For both Micheline and Catherine, the bonds with classmates developed over many shared hours in the labs and the clinic cubicles.

"You spend countless hours with your classmates in dental school, so it's a special connection you make with each other," says Catherine.

DIFFERENT FUTURES, BUT STILL CONNECTED

Since graduation, the two friends have taken different paths. Catherine is back in the Faculty doing a one-year general practice residency (GPR), while Micheline returned home to Cape Breton. She started work at the Sydney Family Dental Centre with Dr. Stephanie Hillier (DDS'16) in the spring and she and her husband welcomed their baby boy, Kayce, on September 17.

"I have a real love for the special needs population," Catherine says, "I also enjoyed the public health elective, which provides care to people who wouldn't otherwise have access to it." She says that the GPR will develop her skillset and equip her to provide care for all populations when she works in private practice."

Their nursing backgrounds brought Micheline and Catherine together at dental school and their shared experiences will help to keep them together. "Catherine is definitely a lifelong best friend," says Micheline, "and she will also be Kayce's godmother when he is christened."✧

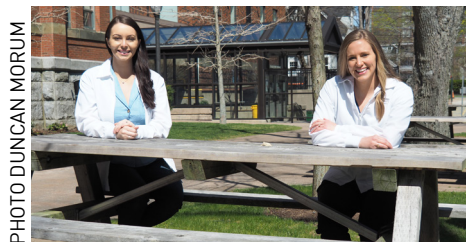


PHOTO DUNCAN MORUM

GABRIEL OGANDO

Big changes for a new life in Nova Scotia

By Cheryl Bell

Gabriel Ogando (DDH'21) was born and raised in the Dominican Republic where he studied dentistry and periodontics. Despite the obvious attractions of living on a Caribbean island, Gabe opted to come to Canada for what he saw as a better opportunity, even though it meant starting his life over as a dental hygienist.

"When people in Halifax think about the Dominican," says Gabe, "they think about all-inclusive resorts and beaches. But I'm from Santo Domingo, which is the capital city of the Dominican Republic."

Gabe says he was always interested in biology, the mouth's impact on the rest of the body, and the work of professionals who care for the mouth. His curiosity led him to study dentistry and then go into private practice.

In 2010, he started working for the Ministry of Health of the Dominican Republic as part of a mobile outreach clinic that travelled to remote towns and villages. These communities did not have easy access to oral health care services and there was little to no knowledge about the impact of poor oral health on overall health.

Gabe loved the work, although the need for care was overwhelming in some communities. But his experience helped him to see his next step. In 2013, he returned to academia to begin a two-year master's degree in periodontics at the Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra in Santo Domingo. "I was motivated by all the periodontal disease I was seeing in the vulnerable populations who visited the mobile clinic," he says.

Gabe's study of periodontics fueled an interest in clinical research and he became involved in numerous projects and research studies. Hired as a part-time instructor at the university after graduation, he continued to participate in research and is the co-author of three published papers, including an epidemiologic study on the gingival phenotype of patients in the Dominican Republic.

"The opportunity to be involved in research in the Dominican Republic is limited because of lack of funding," Gabe explains. But the opportunity to see new technologies at conferences in the United States and Europe strengthened his resolve to be "part of this environment."

A CHANGE WAS NEEDED

After two years of working three jobs – private practice, part-time teaching, and public service with the mobile clinic – Gabe took stock of his life and decided a major change was needed.

"My country is fascinating and beautiful, but I needed to move. I was thinking about my future as a human being and needing some balance in my life," he explains. "I was doing all of these jobs because of my passion, but salaries are not high in the Dominican, even for professionals."

Gabe's Toronto-based brother convinced him to move to Canada in 2018, saying that there were many opportunities for oral health professionals, including dental hygiene, which does not exist as a profession in the Dominican Republic.

"When I learned about the dental hygiene program, my first thought was that this was something I could do because I had done a lot of this work through the mobile clinic," says Gabe.

He enrolled in a health sciences program at Fanshawe College in Ontario, to study for the prerequisites he needed. Then he applied to different colleges and universities in Ontario to study dental hygiene, with the aim of staying near his brother.

After being waitlisted for some of his applications and not receiving replies from others, he widened the net to universities in other provinces.

"Dalhousie was the only university to respond to my application and to accept me," says Gabe. "As an immigrant, you really have to start all over again to get your credentials back. I was so excited to feel that things were finally happening for me."

NEW CONCEPTS AND SKILLS

Despite his prior oral health education, Gabe found there were new concepts and skills to learn at Dal, such as clinical guidelines and standards of practice in Canada. There were also skills to re-learn, including ergonomics. Gabe admits he had fallen into bad habits in



PHOTO DANNY ABRIEL

the mobile clinic. "I was really impressed that my instructors cared so much about our body posture during clinical care," says Gabe.

The pandemic added to the challenge of arriving in an unfamiliar city and starting a new program, most of which was online in the first year. Faculty members were welcoming, but classmates were initially shy and possibly intimidated by Gabe's prior oral health experience. "I didn't want to be seen as the know-it-all guy," he says. "I was there to be a student like everybody else."

As challenging as it was to start a new life in a new country, Gabe made friends and came to love Nova Scotia life, particularly hiking. He hopes his experiences will be valuable to other newcomers.

"I'm a visible minority, I'm male, and I came here as a mature student," he explains. "Maybe my background and experience can be an inspiration for future students and show them they can be dental hygienists."

Gabe is now working for two dental practices in HRM. Although he is thinking about studying for a Master of Education and potentially teaching in the future, for the moment he is happy that his new life in Nova Scotia is up and running. 🇳🇸

Dr. Eric Hatfield: Recipient of the 2020 Outstanding Alumni Award

By Cheryl Bell

Dr. Eric Hatfield (DDS'86) was awarded a 2020 Faculty of Dentistry Outstanding Alumni Award posthumously in October 2020. Dr. Hatfield's sister Jennifer, and Dr. Rick Raftus (DDS'86) accepted the award on his behalf.

Ask anyone who knew him — family member, former classmate, work colleague, fellow volunteer in organized dentistry — and the same words and phrases to describe Dr. Eric Hatfield come around again and again: “humble,” “always smiling,” “he knew everybody,” “level-headed,” “generous,” “dedicated,” “all in,” “well respected and liked.”

Dr. Hatfield was just 60 years old when he died. He had been deeply committed to both his practice and organized dentistry for over 30 years.

IN THE BEGINNING

Eric Hatfield grew up in Cape Sable Island, at the southernmost tip of Nova Scotia. He was the eldest of five children.

His sister Jennifer Hatfield says that her brother was the “only kid in the area at the time to have braces” and that their mother had to bring him up to Halifax once a month to see an orthodontist. That may have piqued his interest in dentistry, she says.

Another factor may have been his summers spent mackerel fishing to help finance his undergraduate degree at Dal. The chilly 3:00 am starts and a bad experience that landed Eric overboard certainly made him realize that fishing was “not for him”, says Jennifer.

Dr. Chad Avery (DDS'12), a partner in the Yarmouth Dental Group and Jennifer's son, says that his uncle was always “interested in science and health care and giving back to his community.” In the early 1980s, when Eric would have been considering his education options, there were just one or two dentists practising in Yarmouth, so there was a local need.

THE CLASS OF '86

Dr. Bill MacInnis (DDS'70) taught general dentistry at the Faculty when Eric was a

student. What stood out for him was Eric's great interest in his patients. “He was caring and empathetic and his communication skills were great,” he says.

“A regular guy who wanted to do good,” is how classmate Dr. Lary Trites (DDS'86) describes the Eric Hatfield he met in dental school.

Eric received prizes in orthodontics and oral surgery during his four years of dentistry studies and his work ethic carried over into his professional life. What also endured were the friendships forged in the classrooms and cubicles of dental school.

“There was a group of six or seven of us in our class at Dal,” says Dr. David Dignan (DDS'86). “We were always together and we just became more and more close. But it was Eric who was the steady glue of the class.”

The glue held beyond graduation. Dr. Rick Raftus (DDS'86) recalls the class getting together for their five-year reunion in 1991, a tradition which then continued on an annual basis. “All the memories we have with each other, we have because of Eric,” he says.

COMMITTED TO ORGANIZED DENTISTRY

Shortly after graduating, Eric's involvement in organized dentistry began as a regional representative with the NSDA. Dr. Tom Raddall (DDS'87) says that Eric was “the type of volunteer who arrived at a meeting prepared and ready to work. He had always done all the reading and he wasn't afraid to take something on.”

Steve Jennex, executive director of the NSDA, remembers meeting Eric in 1991 at the annual meeting of the NSDA, which the Yarmouth regional group was hosting for the first time. A last-minute change had been necessary and people were nervous.

Jennex, who was then in the early days of his career with the NSDA, says that Eric “calmed the waters and the meeting was excellent. In fact, Yarmouth became a favoured place to hold the AGM, I think because it was friendly and less formal. And that was Eric to a T. Nothing ruffled him.”



PHOTO DANNY ABRIEL

Dr. Bill MacInnis was president of the NSDA when Eric started to attend meetings as the regional representative. “Eric had ideas and he spoke up. His judgements and analysis were always appreciated.”

Despite the 3.5-hour journey to Halifax, Eric's involvement grew. He served on every NSDA committee and working group, including chairing the Best Ethical Practice Working Group. “It was a huge job and he took it on,” says Jennex. “But with Eric, you knew that when he agreed to do something, it would get done.”

Eric became president of the NSDA in 1999 when Don Pamenter was CEO. “What struck me about Eric,” he says, “was that he saw his involvement with organized dentistry as a mission, not a job. Dentistry is a self-regulated profession, and he felt that unless good people do good things, it could go south.”

That sense of mission extended to the Provincial Board of Nova Scotia, where Eric served on the board, eventually becoming president. Over the last decade, he lent his skills to national dentistry bodies such as the NDEB, the CDA, CDSPI, the Canadian Dental Regulatory Authorities Federation, and the Canadian section of the International College of Dentists.

A LEGACY OF INSPIRING OTHERS

As important as his own involvement in organized dentistry was to him, Eric was also deeply committed to passing the ball to the next generation. Dr. Ian Cunningham (DDS'01), a partner in the Yarmouth Dental Group, says that he would never have become involved in the NSDA if not for Eric. “He had the great ability to inspire and motivate friends and colleagues. If you had something to complain about, he'd tell you to come to a meeting.” ♡

Part-time Bachelor of Dental Hygiene degree opens new doors

By Cheryl Bell

Many practising dental hygienists got their wish this autumn. School of Dental Hygiene began offering its Bachelor of Dental Hygiene (BDH) program on a part-time basis, making it easier for dental hygienists to add to their education while continuing to work.

"We've known for a while that there are many dental hygienists who would like to study for a degree but who aren't able to take a year off from practice to do it," says Dr. Leigha Rock, director of the School of Dental Hygiene. "This new part-time option will enable them to continue to practise and work towards their degree over two years."

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BACHELOR OF DENTAL HYGIENE AT DALHOUSIE

The two-year Diploma in Dental Hygiene (DDH) program has been offered through the Faculty of Dentistry at Dalhousie University for more than 50 years, enabling students to graduate with the skills and knowledge required to become licensed dental hygienists.

In 2007, interest grew in offering a bachelor-level degree in dental hygiene at Dalhousie that would give students the option to advance their knowledge in dental hygiene and enable them to pursue alternate areas of dental hygiene practice, such as public health. A degree-level program would also give them the academic requirements to be able to continue their education in masters-level programs. In 2009, the Bachelor of Dental Hygiene completion year was added to the dental hygiene program.

The BDH program has historically provided students with an opportunity to instruct first-year dental hygiene students, undertake a research project, and participate in outreach activities within different practice settings, such as long-term care facilities.

This combination of teaching, research, and outreach has appealed to many students who were interested in pursuing a career in teaching in dental hygiene programs, with many going on to become instructors in the

School of Dental Hygiene, says Dr. Rock.

NEW LEARNING, NEW EXPERIENCES

Three years ago, the School began exploring opportunities to provide students with even more experiences and skills.

As a result, the program now offers BDH students opportunities to learn, observe surgeries, and provide preventative oral care and education to paediatric patients at the IWK hospital, observe and assist in the periodontal clinic, and take a restorative dentistry class with first-year dentistry students.

A new "Community Practice and Health Promotion" course builds on the longstanding community collaborations the Faculty of Dentistry has with the North End Community Health Centre and the North Preston Dental Clinic, as well as a more recent collaboration with Phoenix Youth. The students have also participated in an internship with Nova Scotia

"The BDH opens up new opportunities in teaching, public health, and other careers"

Public Health, during which they helped to deliver the fluoride rinse programs in schools.

These collaborations give BDH students the opportunity to provide care to children, adults, and disadvantaged youth from a variety of different backgrounds and offer experience in assessing the oral health needs of a particular Halifax community.

"The students have to determine what actions the organization and dental hygienists need to take to meet the oral health needs of its community better and organize the scheduling of those actions within the academic year," explains Heather Doucette, an associate professor in the School of Dental Hygiene.

Courses in teaching methodology, health

policy, and research methodology complete the course line-up for the degree program. Dr. Rock says that the pandemic actually happened at a good time for the development of the part-time BDH because it prompted the creation of new online didactic content, giving mature students greater flexibility in when and where they complete those course requirements. "It removes another barrier to further studies for those students," says Dr. Rock.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

The deadline for applications for 2022 is March 15. Up to 16 BDH students can be accepted each year. Full-time students receive preferential acceptance and any remaining spots are filled with part-time students. Students who opt for the part-time program take two to three courses per term for two academic years in a prescribed schedule.

The advantages of the BDH program are clear. "Dental hygiene is a profession with a high injury rate," says Prof. Doucette. "The pandemic has also highlighted the vulnerability of our profession because many dental hygienists have been unable to work. The BDH opens up new opportunities in teaching, public health, and other careers."

"The BDH really is a stepping-stone to new avenues for dental hygiene students," adds Dr. Rock. "And it helps to bolster our profession. Students with the BDH can go on to masters and other degree programs. To think that we have increased accessibility to these opportunities for a whole new group of people is so exciting." ♡

PHOTO: NICK PEARCE





It's tick season

Why dental professionals should know about the signs and symptoms of Lyme disease

By Cheryl Bell

At the end of August 2020, a patient booked an urgent appointment with her dentist. A painful toothache had woken her the night before. Her symptoms also included intense pain in her jaw, temple, and neck, accompanied by a tingling on her lower left lip and left side of her tongue. She also experienced the feeling of sweats and chills during the night and an odd sensation in her shoulder and left arm.

Despite thorough examinations, neither her dentist nor the endodontist she was referred to could find any dental abnormalities. A visit to a Halifax hospital emergency room ruled out both a heart attack and a stroke. It was only when an inflamed bump with a bull's eye appearance appeared on her thigh a day later that the patient's family doctor was able to diagnose Lyme disease.

The case is the topic of a paper that Dr. Isabel Mello, assistant professor in the Dalhousie University Faculty of Dentistry,

published with Halifax endodontist, Dr. John Peters, and Faculty of Dentistry assistant professor Dr. Chris Lee in the *Journal of Endodontics* in June 2020, "Neuropathy mimicking dental pain in a patient diagnosed with Lyme disease."

"It was shocking to me to know someone — a personal friend of mine — with Lyme disease," says Dr. Mello, explaining her interest in the case. "It is a serious illness that can present with a variety of symptoms, such as orofacial pain, fever, and chest pain. If there is no obvious tick bite, Lyme disease can go undiagnosed, bringing much suffering to the patient."

NOVA SCOTIA—AN AT-RISK AREA FOR LYME DISEASE

Lyme disease is caused by a bacterium that is spread by infected blacklegged ticks. According to the Nova Scotia government publication, *Guidance for Primary Care and Emergency*

Medicine Providers in the Management of Lyme Disease in Nova Scotia, the entire province of Nova Scotia is an "at-risk area" for Lyme disease. The patient had been camping in two high-risk areas in Nova Scotia before her diagnosis, but this is not the type of question that would normally be asked during a dental appointment.

Although tick season officially begins in April, ticks are active all year. In fact, if the temperature is above 4°C, ticks will be on the move. Early detection and treatment are important if more serious conditions, such as arthritis, nervous system problems, and carditis, which affects the heart's electrical system, are to be prevented.

"Pain in the orofacial area is not a rare presentation of Lyme disease," says Dr. Mello, "Although one of the differential diagnoses the endodontist put forward was trigeminal neuralgia, which is one of the presentations of Lyme disease, a definitive diagnosis of the illness is difficult without a visible bite site or rash."

Someone with Lyme disease may experience temporomandibular joint pain, headache, and neuralgia. In particular, symptoms of neuropathy in the orofacial area, such as numbness, prickling or tingling, and sharp, jabbing, throbbing, or burning pain may mimic dental pain and could prompt patients to visit their dentists looking for answers.

THE NEED TO KNOW

"Any health care provider — including dental practitioners — should be aware of the risk factors for Lyme disease, know about its signs and symptoms, and consider Lyme disease as a differential diagnosis for atypical pain in the orofacial area," says Dr. Mello. "This is particularly important when there is no obvious tick bite."

Dr. Mello suggests that health professionals consider asking more in-depth questions, including about recent changes to a patient's overall health and trips to high-risk areas. She also recommends that they consider making further referrals and collaborating with other health professionals.

"A delayed diagnosis is frustrating and worrying for both the patient and health care providers," says Dr. Mello. "This disease can also be fatal. Dental professionals play an important role in helping to diagnose Lyme disease early."

Dr. Robert Murray: from dentist to Lyme disease activist

Dr. Robert Murray (DDS'72) retired as a dentist from his Lunenburg practice in 2013 but immediately found himself on a crusade: to warn people of the devastating effects of Lyme disease and to promote greater understanding and knowledge about this frequently misdiagnosed and serious illness. He believes that oral health care professionals have a vital role to play.

Murray's first encounter with Lyme disease took place shortly before he retired. A female patient – a professional gardener – came into his practice and showed him a “huge round rash on her shoulder.” Murray had never seen anything like it, but he now knows what he was looking at.

A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH LYME DISEASE

In 2012, Murray himself was bitten by a tick and around the same time had a hip replaced. He initially tested negative for Lyme disease. A negative test for Lyme is not unusual — around one-third of positive cases are missed — particularly in the early stages of the disease when the antibodies may not have yet developed. It took about a year, and a long process of eliminating other causes, for him to arrive at a diagnosis.

“The *Borrelia* bacteria go to wherever you've had an injury — in my case, the connective tissue involved in my hip replacement. It's called tissue tropism, which is similar to the process of metastasis in cancer.” It is easy to mistake Lyme for other conditions and illnesses because it “mimics” them, depending

on what part of the body it is affecting.

Lyme, says Murray, is a “complex disease.” In the early stages, patients may be misdiagnosed with chronic fatigue or fibromyalgia. If it's not treated effectively early on, the late-stage manifestations are “crippling to the patient,” he says, and do not respond to short-term antibiotic treatment. He maintains that the tests are particularly bad at detecting late-stage neurological Lyme, which can be misdiagnosed as Alzheimer's, MS, ALS, and Parkinson's disease.

A RELUCTANT ACTIVIST

Murray's personal struggle with Lyme and its diagnosis turned him into a reluctant activist, challenging and asking questions about how the disease is diagnosed and treated, and pointing to conflicts of interest in the medical and long-term disability industries.

He joined the board of the Canadian Lyme Disease Foundation in 2014, a registered charity that “aims to provide research funding for zoonotic disease, to increase awareness of Lyme and its associated diseases, and to communicate concerns to government public health agencies.” He feels his dental degree is an asset to his work as a board member, enabling him to “read the science” and understand the intricacies of topics, such as antibiotic resistance.

He also visits tourist bureaus, doctors' and dentists' offices, and campgrounds to distribute information about the risks of ticks and Lyme disease. “I'll even hold something like a table clinic at farmers markets, talking

to people and answering their questions,” he says.

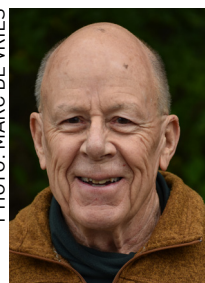
Like Dr. Isabel Mello (see adjoining article), Murray feels that oral health professionals have a role to play in the early diagnosis of Lyme disease. “It should always be in the back of their minds when symptoms don't fit. This is a clinical disease and dental professionals should be familiar with the pattern of Lyme. Early detection is key so that the disease can be treated aggressively, before it seeps deeper into the tissues.”

Dentists and dental hygienists are in a good position to spot Lyme disease early and to inform patients of the hazards, he says. “We teach prevention when it comes to caring for teeth,” he says, “so there's no reason why we can't tell people that they should wear

“Lyme should always be in the back of their minds when symptoms don't fit”

long pants, long sleeves, and pull their socks up over their pants when they go outside. In the future, I'd like to see dentists be able to prescribe antibiotics for post-tick bite prophylaxis of Lyme disease.”

PHOTO: MARC DE VRIES



Dr. Robert Murray (DDS'72)



Dental professionals can help to identify and obtain early treatment for patients who are infected with Lyme disease. Patients with unexplained or atypical pain in the orofacial area should be asked a few additional screening questions:

- ▶ Have you recently been walking, hiking, or camping in an area where ticks are known to be present?
- ▶ Have you seen any unusual insect bites on your body or other areas of swelling or inflammation?
- ▶ Have you noticed any changes to your overall health, such as chills or sweats, tingling in your tongue or lip, or pain in your neck and side of your head?
- ▶ Have you experienced any unexplained fatigue? ⚡

Providing a path into health-care professions for African Nova Scotian students

By Cheryl Bell

The COVID-19 pandemic presented some challenges for Promoting Leadership in health for African Nova Scotians (PLANS) to offer its regular camps for teens. But an unexpected grant through the Dartmouth General Hospital Foundation provided the perfect opportunity to connect with African Nova Scotian high school students who are interested in careers in the health professions.

For Sarah Upshaw, the program manager of PLANS, it was a great opportunity, although it meant creating a 14-week program at short notice. She worked with the Faculties of Medicine, Dentistry, and Health to hold sessions on many different health professions, together with information about applying to university, scholarships, and financial literacy.

"I wanted to provide a meaningful experience for the students and make the best use of the funds I had for the program," says Upshaw.

Students in the co-op program at five local high schools provided the ideal audience for the new PLANS program. They were already enrolled in a co-op program, 80 hours of which was allocated to a placement. But because of COVID-19, traditional placements for co-op students interested in the health



Tek Omod, a Grade 12 student at Citadel High School, and Dr. Cynthia Andrews.

professions – such as in hospitals and nursing homes — were not available. The PLANS program helped to fill this gap.

WHAT ORAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS DO

At the end of January, 10 Grade 11 and 12 students filed into a conference room at the Zatzman Sportsplex to listen as Dr. Cynthia Andrews, Prof. Heather Doucette, faculty members in the Faculty of Dentistry and School of Dental Hygiene respectively, and

Juliette Thomas, a dental assistant and the co-ordinator of the North Preston Dental Clinic, explained the roles of dentists, dental hygienists, and dental assistants. Second-year dental hygiene student Jennifer Johnson was also there to answer questions from a student perspective.

Dr. Andrews and Prof. Doucette talked about the educational requirements of their respective programs. They also gave a mini lesson on nutrition and what causes plaque and the problems it can cause. Juliette Thomas set out the responsibilities of her role at the North Preston Dental Clinic as both a dental assistant and the administrator of the clinic.

Prof. Doucette explained why it is important for more African Nova Scotian students to enter the oral health-care professions. "We need more African Nova Scotians in the various health professions. It's important to increase diversity in health care. Patients feel more comfortable with health-care providers who they can relate to and who may better understand particular barriers to care that they face."

Jennifer Johnson fielded questions from students who asked about the workload and the types of activities she was involved in. "You have an eight-to-five day, plus studying



Janelle Colley with Dr. Cynthia Andrews, Faculty of Dentistry.

PHOTO: NICK PEARCE

PHOTO: NICK PEARCE

in the evenings,” says Jennifer. “Then in second year you spend 12 hours a week caring for patients. It’s a lot of work, but a lot of fun. And the best part is, you know you’ll have a job when you’re finished.”

COVID-19 limited the oral health hands-on activities the students were able to try, but they were able to test their reverse hand skills using a mirror – something dentists and dental hygienists are required to learn in order to be able to operate on areas of the mouth that cannot be seen directly.

WHAT THE STUDENTS THOUGHT

Beth Ejigu, a Grade 11 student at Citadel High School, would like to be a dentist. When asked why, she says it’s partly because “I enjoy working with my hands” and partly because she has braces on her teeth and is intrigued by oral health care. She says she enjoyed the session and learned a lot.

Mwamini Bifakubaho is a Grade 12 student, also at Citadel. She’s interested in a career in nursing or dentistry, but says she has no one at home she can ask about post-secondary education. The co-op program enables her to explore many different health-care careers and learn about university life and scholarship and bursary options as well.

“I’ve never laughed so much in a session before,” says Tek Omod, a senior student at Citadel, “It was so cool.” She had been thinking about applying to nursing but is now considering oral health studies too.

Janelle Colley, a Grade 11 student at Auburn High School, knows she wants to do something in the medical field and appreciates the broad exposure the PLANS program is giving her. “There are so many programs I didn’t know about. It’s really opened my eyes.”

The oral health session helped Janelle to understand the different roles of dental assistants, dental hygienists, and dentists, and she appreciated that Johnson was on hand to give a student point of view. When asked if she would consider a career in oral health, she says “it’s definitely something to think about.”

NEXT STEPS FOR PLANS

Upshaw is delighted with the way the sessions have worked with the co-op

students. “We have been able to provide them with information about scholarships, such as the Johnson Pathway Scholarships, and support them through the university application process and any barriers they encounter along the way.”

She says the students also benefit from attending the sessions as a cohort. “They make friends here and some of them will likely

attend college or university together.”

Sarah already has funding for a second co-op placement program this term and is hopeful that she will be able to roll the program out to rural schools. She is also exploring ways of getting information to junior high students so that they know what courses to take in high school to make them eligible for health-care programs at university. †

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DR. AHMAD HUSSEIN

Green, clean, and community focused

By Cheryl Bell

Dr. Ahmad Hussein (DDS'13) worked in Dr. Song Lee's lab in the Dentistry Building as a microbiology and immunology student at Dal, researching infectious diseases and microbiology related to oral diseases. But the idea of being a dentist didn't cross his mind.

It was only after graduating with his MSc from Dal and was working as a research scientist with Dr. Scott Halperin at the Canadian Centre for Vaccinology that a conversation with a relative planted the idea of dentistry in his head.

"It was not an immediate aha moment," says Hussein, "but it made sense." He enjoyed lab research, but he also craved human interaction. So he applied to Dalhousie to study dentistry.

MANY IRONS IN THE FIRE

Not knowing if his application to dental school would be successful, Hussein explored options with a consulting company that helps green technology companies plan their businesses. Intrigued by the practical application of green technology to solve problems in a commercial way, Hussein worked with the consulting company "for fun", just in case dental school didn't work out.

When he began studying dentistry at Dal, Hussein assumed that his exploration of green tech was over. After all, his life was suddenly very busy with his studies and working as a researcher on the microbiology related to oral diseases.

Hussein also found that the green tech consulting company "wouldn't let him go." His new life involved traveling on the weekends for work and studying dentistry during the week. By the time he graduated from dental school, he had acquired the rights of an agricultural technology that would enable him to operate his own green technology company.

"It was a lot of risk taking and pressure to meet my own personal demand to become a better dentist and also to succeed in something I have a passion for, which is green energy and renewable resources," explains Hussein. "Finding a way to do both things was

a highlight of dental school for me."

Despite a tempting offer to join a practice in Florida, Hussein decided to stay in his home community of Halifax. He joined Drs. Sathyasai Murty (DDS'99) and Mary-Anne MacDonald at Scotia Dental, a dentalcorp practice. He says he didn't initially understand what working for dentalcorp would entail, other than that the company looked after all the aspects of running a business that dentists frequently find a burden, like accounting, IT, marketing, and procurement.

"What I didn't realize was dentalcorp's capacity to increase our knowledge base in the business of dentistry, including time management and leadership, as well our dentistry skills," says Hussein. "It's built into the system."

Hussein was selected as one of seven newly qualified dentists across Canada to join dentalcorp's Associate Development Program, which is aimed at creating new leaders who will execute the company's vision of dramatically improving patient care. He was able to take advantage of specialized courses and to work with mentors on areas of dentistry that interested him, including endodontics, laser technology, and the advanced surgical techniques.

GOING GREEN WITH NILE FIBER

In parallel with his blossoming dentistry career, Hussein's green technology company was taking shape.

Nile Fiber Atlantic Canada grows inexpensive biomass that replaces trees in the fiber industry. "The material can be used in anything a tree can be used for," Hussein explains. "But it can be grown in a way that does not compete with the production of food, such as on reclaimed surface mining sites."

Since it was formed in 2014, the company has received major grants, establishing partnerships, and signed large volume contracts (brokered by Ekman & Co AB) to provide energy pellets to Drax in the UK. IKEA will use Nile Fibre technology and the



Dr. Ahmad Hussein with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at One North End to announce funding for under-privileged youth in Halifax.

military is considering using it to produce a clean jet fuel.

GIVING BACK IS INGRAINED

Despite his many interests, Hussein still finds time to volunteer. "Giving back is ingrained in my core," he says, "from my family, my culture, and my religion. The idea of taking and not giving is almost seen as taboo."

As a dental student, Hussein learned about the volunteer efforts of Drs. Archie Morrison and David Precious, who travelled yearly to Vietnam to perform cleft palate surgeries, and saw the efforts of Dr. Tom Boran to foster and support outreach clinics in the Halifax region.

"It made me realize that being trained as a dentist goes beyond just being a dentist," he says. "It means taking my training and what I'm passionate about and applying both together to do something positive for my community here in Halifax."

Four years of mentorship from Dr. Scott Maclean (DDS'91), a committed volunteer, particularly with organized dentistry, helped inspire Hussein to say yes to serving on the Faculty's Dentistry Alumni Committee, where he looks for mentorship opportunities for current students and seeks to strengthen alumni ties with the Faculty.

Hussein serves on the boards of Feed Nova Scotia and One North End (The ONE) and chairs the board of the Ummah Mosque and

Community Centre, roles that have found him working closely with community leaders and politicians at all levels.

FOCUSED ON NOVA SCOTIA

Hussein believes he is well-placed to bring

about positive change in Nova Scotia, working with the provincial government on policies to help newcomers feel at home and to attract green-based businesses and manufacturing that will make NS a global leader in the sector. Professionally, he intends to work with

government to create free dental health-care programs for seniors and incentives for clinics to see children to ease the burden on the IWK.

It is no surprise that Hussein was named one of *East Coast Experience's* most inspiring immigrants in the Maritimes in 2020. ‡

PHOTO: DR. JEAN PROVO (DDS'01)



Dr. Jean Provo: Paving a path for digital dentistry in education

By Victoria Law

Digital dentistry has come a long way since Dr. Jean Provo (DDS'01) was first introduced to the technology back in 2001. In the final two months of her dentistry studies, one of the Halifax dental labs visited the Faculty to demonstrate the technology to students. It was new to most people then. Now, it is a game-changer for our dental future.

Provo was raised in North Preston, N.S., and received both her BSc and dentistry degrees from Dalhousie. She moved to the west coast to practise and now owns NOVO Dental Care in Abbotsford, B.C.

At the beginning of her career, Provo considered herself lucky to work as an associate dentist at a practice that was an early adopter of digital dentistry technology. She appreciated the opportunity to learn and work with digital

scanners right from the beginning. While she liked the idea of digital scanners, she found that they were not yet user friendly and the results were not what she hoped they would be.

Provo kept a close watch on how the technology was evolving. When she opened her own practice, she regularly invited CEREC company representatives to come to her practice and demonstrate the updates being made to digital scanning machines. When the technology was where she wanted it to be, she made the leap to purchase the equipment.

DIGITAL DENTISTRY – QUICK, PRECISE, COMFORTABLE

Provo's practice has been using digital scanners for almost four years now. Her staff have received training to use the equipment through a program offered by a Patterson representative. The digital scanners greatly improve accuracy and patients can have their teeth scanned without the discomfort of traditional impressions. The technology makes for extremely precise and quick scans of teeth, and the results are available immediately, which improves patient care, she says. The scanners also help with reproducibility and efficiency in daily clinic operations.

"Patients absolutely love the digital scanners and they quickly became as excited as we were about the change," says Provo. "It's so much easier from their point of view, without the need to have impression material in their mouths. The patients who have trouble with gagging particularly love it."

Provo also points out that people are busy and don't want to make multiple trips to the dental office to get a temporary crown removed and then return to get a permanent one put in place. "Digital technology expedites the process," she says. "It really speaks to the reality of patients' lives, which is a bonus."

MORE TRAINING FOR DENTAL ASSISTANTS

The positive results digital dentistry has

brought to Provo's practice sparked a curiosity about the incorporation of digital dentistry into dental education. She contacted the Faculty of Dentistry at Dalhousie and was happy to learn about the recent investment in digital scanners for the student clinic. She is a strong believer in training dental health professionals in digital dentistry because that is where the profession is headed, she says.

Several years ago, Provo discovered that dental assistants in her area of British Columbia were not being trained in digital dentistry. She found that the Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) program practicum students she was bringing into her clinic were not as trained or as confident as in previous years. Many of them had never experienced digital scanners and seemed to have less manual dexterity. Her colleagues also noticed the lack of education in digital dentistry.

Provo decided to take action. She now volunteers on the CDA program advisory board at the University of the Fraser Valley, which runs the CDA program for the area, with the aim of making the program stronger. One of her goals is to ensure that digital dentistry enhances the curriculum.

"There is a disconnect between the learning and school environment and the real world of a dental practice," she says. "Training on digital dentistry should be 100% mandatory for all dental education, and I am so excited to see that this is happening."

The digital dentistry learning curve may be daunting for some, she says, but the benefits to patients, dental teams and the profession is game changing, especially when it comes to communicating digitally with colleagues and patients.

"Whether it is at the diagnosis and planning, or the treatment stage, digital just makes it better!" Provo says. "I feel so fortunate to be practising dentistry in 2021." ‡

Annual Giving Report

The Faculty of Dentistry is extremely grateful for the generosity of our alumni, friends and organizations that support our Faculty and Dalhousie University. The following is a list acknowledging those who have made financial contributions between April 2020 and March 2021. We sincerely appreciate your support. We would also like to thank our donors who requested to remain anonymous.

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If you would like to honour the memory of someone noted on this list by donating to the Gifts and Memorial Scholarship Fund, please contact Victoria Hamilton at 902-494-6170 or victoria.hamilton@dal.ca, or donate online at www.giving.dal.ca/dentistry.



Remembering Kate MacDonald

Katherine (Kate) MacDonald died peacefully at her home on January 17 in her 88th year. She taught in the School of Dental Hygiene for 30 years and was director for 13 years. She is remembered as an excellent colleague to work with, a mentor to students and faculty, and a lovely person.

Born on Prince Edward Island, Prof. MacDonald went to Boston in 1951 to study at the Forsyth School for Dental Hygienists. She completed a Bachelor of Science in health education at Boston University during the summers of 1964-67, and later on in her career (1975-77) she studied for an MEd in continuing education here at Dalhousie University.

Over her 30 years at Dal, Prof. MacDonald served in many different capacities, including as director of the School of Dental Hygiene from 1969 to 1982. In 1987 she became director of Continuing Dental Education, a role she

held until her retirement in 1997. According to her former colleague, Dr. Doug Chaytor, Prof. MacDonald had a "belief in the importance of preparing students to provide clinical care and supporting them in practice through continuing education."

During her time at Dalhousie, Prof. MacDonald served on many university and Faculty of Dentistry committees and professional organizations. She enjoyed helping to support the Canadian Dental Association accreditation process. She also had several publications and presented numerous papers.

On Kate's retirement as director of the School of Dental Hygiene, her colleagues set up a student bursary fund in her honour in 1982. Each year, the bursary helps support a dental hygiene student who is facing financial need pursue their education at Dalhousie. Donations can be made to the Kate MacDonald Bursary Fund at giving.dal.ca/kate.

DID YOU KNOW?

New digital dentistry equipment and software will transform teaching and learning in the Faculty of Dentistry. If you would like to join alumni and friends who have chosen to support this exciting and ambitious project, please contact Melanie Bremner [902.266.2021 or melanie.bremner@dal.ca] or Victoria Hamilton [902.497.6825 or victoria.hamilton@dal.ca] for more information.

A life of caring for others

By Lois McLean

It all started at Dalhousie for me — becoming a dental hygienist, getting married, starting a family, a fulfilling career.

I saw my husband, Rory (DDS'80) on my first day at Dal. It was orientation week and we were playing in a baseball game. He was in the second year of dentistry and I was just starting the dental hygiene program. But it was while travelling back and forth on the ferry to Prince Edward Island, which was home for both of us, that we first talked to each other. We had a whirlwind romance and decided to get married the following summer. I was pregnant during my second year of dental hygiene and our eldest child was born in the Grace Maternity Hospital in Halifax in July 1980. Logan is now a neuroradiologist in Salt Lake City and she's the only one of our three children who didn't go to Dal. But her birth keeps us connected to Halifax.

It would have been easier for me to study nursing closer to home on Prince Edward Island and I did think about it. But studying dental hygiene was a passion for me. It was still a relatively new profession in the 1970s. I wanted to go to a bigger university, to expand my horizons, and to have an adventure. Going to Dalhousie was part of that.

After we graduated, Rory and I worked in Victoria and Qualicum Beach in British Columbia before going to Fort McMurray in Alberta for around 10 years. Then we decided that there was opportunity in Nevada, so we moved to Las Vegas and then Palm Springs in California before we moved home to P.E.I. 16 years ago. We definitely had an adventure!

My diploma and my education served me so well through all those places. It was the same



for Rory. Nobody ever questioned Dal. It was accredited and seen as a prestigious place to study. I'm really proud of that. When I found that I needed certificates in administering local anaesthetic, nitrous oxide sedation, and radiation to be able to practise in the US, I was well prepared to take those courses and exams because of the education I had at Dal.

Rory and I decided to make a legacy gift through our estate because our whole careers and our education have revolved around Dal. Two of our children, Travis (DDS'10) and Alexis (BSc'13, DDS'19), also went to Dal to get their dentistry degrees. Now we have four grandsons and we would like Dalhousie to be there for them and other future generations.

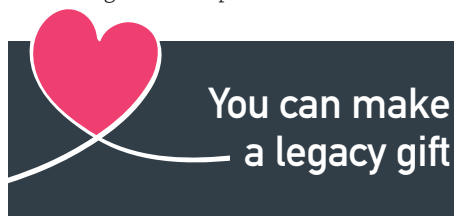
GIVING IS PART OF THE JOB

There have been times over the years where there hasn't been extra cash or the time to think about things. You have your mortgage, your children, you're busy working, and there are times when you don't give back. But making a gift through our estate means that we have

"My education served me well."

more money to give and we felt it would be a nice thing for our children to remember us by—to know that we gave something to Dalhousie where everything started.

I've loved working in dental hygiene every day for 42 years. It has been a fast-paced and changing career and I've had wonderful relationships with my patients. I am proud of my kids for choosing their careers. It makes me feel that Rory and I must have spoken highly of our careers. If we had sat down at the dinner table and complained about our work, I don't think the children would have gone into dentistry. I hope we have been good role models for a life of helping to care for others. If you go into the health professions, giving is part of the job description. You are giving of yourself. ♡



If you would like to make a gift to the Faculty of Dentistry through your estate, we can tell you about your options and help you through the process. To find out more, please contact Melanie Bremner [902.266.2021 or melanie.bremner@dal.ca] or Victoria Hamilton [902.497.6825 or victoria.hamilton@dal.ca]

Dean's List

Congratulations to our alumni, faculty, and staff who continue to receive awards and recognition for their work and contribute to the fields of dentistry and dental hygiene. If you have any news items or story ideas to share, please send them to alumni.dentistry@dal.ca.

ALUMNI

Dr. Heather Carr (DDS'88) received the 2021 Dr. P.S. Christie Award for Distinguished Service from the NSDA.

Kelsey Henneberry (BDH'20) and Shannon Hilland (BDH'20) had their manuscript, 'Are dental hygienists at risk for noise-induced hearing loss? A literature review', accepted into the *Canadian Journal of Dental Hygiene* (June 2021 issue) while they were still students.

Dr. Richard Holden (DDS'89) was elected CDA president for 2021-2022 and Dr. Heather Carr (DDS'88) as vice president.

Dr. Christos Papadopoulos (DDS'13) was named a gold winner in the dentistry category of the 2021 Moncton Community Votes Awards. He is also the Atlantic

regional chair of the Smiles 4 Canada, a program that helps young Canadians receive free orthodontic treatment.

Dr. Joanne Thomas (DDS'89) received the NSDA Award of Excellence for 2021.

Dr. Sangeeta Wylie's (DDS'01) play, *We the Same*, had its world premiere in November.

FACULTY

Dr. Terry Ackles was the inaugural winner of the Faculty of Dentistry Above and Beyond Award in 2021 for her sterling work to ensure the safe and efficient running of the Faculty Emergency clinic, the first clinic to offer emergency dental care to the people of Nova Scotia in the spring of 2020.

Dr. Mark Filiaggi was appointed associate dean of research and graduate studies,



effective July 1, 2021. He replaces Dr. Mary McNally, who retired from this role.

Associate dean of students **Dr. Ferne Kraglund** (DDS'04) is the recipient of a Rosemary Gill Award for her outstanding service, support, and guidance to students.



Dr. Chris Lee (DDS'04) received the NSDA's T.D. Ingham Volunteer Award for 2021.



Dr. Brendan Leung was awarded a Research Nova Scotia New Health Investigator Grant for the project: Harnessing oral microbiota to prevent chemotherapy-induced

oral mucositis: functional screening using a bioprinted mammalian-microbe co-culture model.



Dr. Jennifer MacLellan (DDS'94) has been installed as the NSDA president for 2021-22.

Dr. Mary McNally (DDS'92) has been appointed professor emeritus, effective July 1, 2021.



Dr. Leigha Rock, has been elected to the Canadian Association for Dental Research executive council as councillor-at-large for the 2021-23 term. It is the first time

in the history of the organization that a dental hygienist has held this position.



Dr. Evan Shaw, director of the paediatric GPR program, received the 2021 W. W. Wood Award for Excellence in Dental Education.



Dental hygiene instructor **Wendy Stewart** (DDH'01) was installed as the new president of the Canadian Dental Hygiene Association.

As president, she plans to continue to advocate for the essential nature of dental hygiene care and the link between oral health and overall health.



Dr. Tammy Wright was appointed associate dean of clinics, effective July 2021. She replaces Dr. Blaine Cleghorn, who retired from this role.

STAFF

We welcomed several new staff members this year and also saw some staff members take on new roles:

Tanya Aquino – clinic nurse

Sam Baldwin – research development officer

Melanie Bremner – donor relations officer

Lisa Crotty – promoted to team lead, MDR

Michelle Harris – administration assistant, OMFS

Charlene Jarvis – DA, moved to permanent status

Leslie Kenwell – instructor, School of Dental Hygiene

Tracy Laba – technician, MDR

Kathy MacFarlane – manager, alumni engagement and donor relations

Kyle Maxwell-Cox – technician, Building Services

Anne Marie Nicolle – promoted to clinical operations manager

Nirali Patel – administration assistant, School of Dental Hygiene

Jennifer Tanner – technician, MDR

Jennifer Tanner – front desk, Patient Services

Yang (Jason) Wang – finance clerk, Dental Stores

PHOTO: DANIEL ST. LOUIS

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PHOTO: DANNY ABRIEL

PHOTO: DANNY ABRIEL

Serving the North Preston community

By Cheryl Bell

Tucked away on its own, 25 km from Halifax, the community of North Preston has always had to work hard to provide local and easily accessible oral health care to its residents.

When the North Preston Dental Clinic was first established in the Nelson Whynder Elementary School 25 years ago, both children and adults could receive oral health care there. After the general dentist left, however, and only paediatric dentists supervised the clinic, adult patients could no longer receive treatment in the clinic.

The need for adult oral health care didn't go away, however, and the requests continued to come in.

WIDE OPEN FOR OPPORTUNITIES

The opportunity to bring back adult care came about nearly four years ago when the School of Dental Hygiene was exploring new community-based clinical practice settings for its Bachelor of Dental Hygiene (BDH) students.

"They were looking for new outreach opportunities and we were wide open for them," says Juliette Thomas, the dental assistant and administrator at the North Preston Dental Clinic.



Juliette Thomas

BDH students are licensed dental hygienists, which means they can work independently, without supervision. When adult patients come to the clinic, the BDH students carry out clinical evaluations, take medical and dental histories, and provide dental hygiene care. Patients can also be referred to the Dal clinic for further treatment.

More than 60 patients visit the clinic, which takes place once a week and serves all the Preston communities and surrounding area. New patients continue to book appointments. Two BDH students work at the same time, one in each operatory. A recall system reminds patients that they are due for a dental hygiene recare appointment.

"I've seen patients come in nervous and not knowing what to expect — some for their first time ever," says Juliette. "They leave happy and with nothing but gratitude to have this service close by. Many of them tell their family and friends."

One adult patient, Earl Brooks, says he was impressed with the cleaning he received from the BDH students and he also appreciated that he could receive care just 10 minutes from his home — and free parking.

In addition to providing dental hygiene care at the clinic, BDH students also give oral health presentations to youth and seniors at family resources centres and to families at daycare facilities in the community.

A GIFT TO THE COMMUNITY

Rachael Dvorski (BDH'21) was one of the BDH leads for the North Preston clinic. In this role, she helped to organize an assessment program for seniors. "This meant we could refer them to the main Dalhousie clinic, other health-care providers, or to the North Preston clinic for hygiene treatment that we provided."



Current student Mykayla Commandeur says she loves how enthusiastic patients are about caring for their oral health and enjoyed being part of a community-based oral health education initiative. "The North Preston Dental Clinic is a gift to the community," she says, "providing care to patients who may not otherwise have access to it."

The experience gained goes far beyond the dental chair, with students learning about patients' lives in the community, the barriers and struggles they face, and interacting with patients they might not normally see.

"A lot of hygienists are interested in the public health field," says Rachael, "and the North Preston clinic is such a good way to dive into it."

Juliette believes the students gain from their outreach experiences in a different community. "I think it helps them to see things a little differently and I believe they really benefit from it," she says. ☺



Earl Brooks



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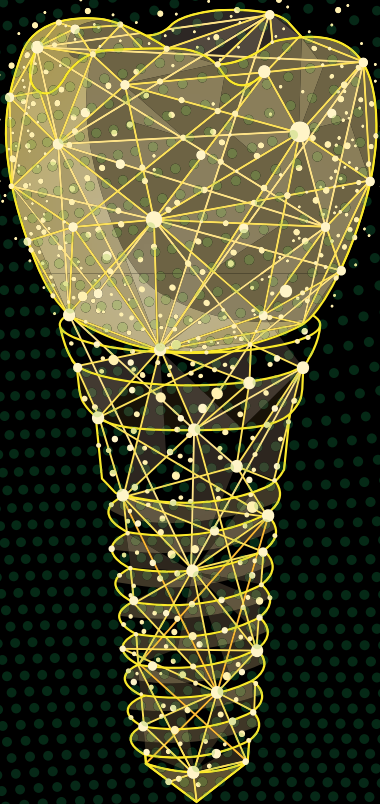


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