APEX

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Winter 2025

May Peace Be With You as Well

Content

Articles

Backyard

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Your contributions in the form of articles, photos and/or ideas are greatly appreciated. The APEX editorial staff is interested in articles of general membership interest. This can include an accomplishment, interesting hobbies, innovative ideas, volunteer efforts, etc. Please feel free to submit an article or call for an interview. All articles are subject to editorial review.

Presidential Pondering

Dr. Filipe Lima, SDS President

As the year draws to a close, I find myself reflecting on the incredible journey we have shared at the Stanislaus Dental Society. Serving as your President has been a privilege. I am deeply grateful for the trust you placed in me and for the unwavering support of our local dental community. It is an honor to lead a group so dedicated to clinical excellence and patient care. As I prepare to pass the torch, I do so with immense confidence; our incoming executive board is composed of talented, passionate leaders who are already hard at work ensuring that SDS remains a strong resource for all our members. Together with Robin Brown, our incredible executive director, the society is in great hands. This year has served as a powerful reminder of the value of organized dentistry. While we focus on our individual practices, the "tripartite" system—local, state, and national—works tirelessly behind the scenes to protect our profession. At the state level, the California Dental Association (CDA) has achieved monumental wins, including championing legislation to improve Medi-Cal Dental reimbursement rates and fighting for transparency in dental insurance. These legislative victories ensure that our focus remains where it belongs: on the best interests of our patients rather than administrative hurdles. On the national stage, the American Dental Association (ADA) has been equally instrumental, successfully advocating for dental insurance reform and pushing for policies that reduce the burden of student debt for our newest colleagues. Through our collective voice, we have secured a seat at the table in Washington D.C. and Sacramento, protecting the autonomy of the dental profession. As I conclude my term, I encourage each of you to stay engaged and active within our society. Our strength lies in our unity, and I look forward to seeing all that we will continue to accomplish together in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Filipe S Lima DDS

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Selective Caries Removal — Are We Finally Comfortable Leaving Caries Behind?

Andrew Smith, DDS
SDS Editor

Selective caries removal (SCR) continues to challenge one of dentistry's oldest instincts — the urge to remove all carious dentine. Instead, SCR proposes a conservative approach: eliminate infected dentine at the periphery but preserve softened dentine near the pulp to avoid exposure and maintain vitality (Lim et al., 2023).

Evidence increasingly supports this technique. Systematic reviews and randomized trials have found that SCR **reduces pulp exposure rates** and maintains long-term tooth vitality compared to complete excavation (Barros et al., 2019; Gözetici-Çil et al., 2022). The idea is simple — seal in the remaining bacteria, starve them of nutrients, and let the pulp's defense mechanisms handle the rest.

Still, controversy lingers. The **subjectivity of tactile cues**—terms like "soft" and "leathery" dentine—makes standardization difficult (Lim et al., 2023). Critics worry about restoration durability and the skill required to achieve a truly bacteria-tight seal. Even among well-informed clinicians, surveys show many remain **uneasy leaving caries behind**, describing the act as counterintuitive despite data to the contrary (Kettle et al., 2025).

Perhaps SCR's greatest challenge isn't biological but psychological. It forces clinicians to balance the comfort of traditional "clean" dentistry with the evidence supporting minimal intervention. As materials improve and caries biology becomes better understood, SCR might not feel like a compromise—but a calculated preservation of what the tooth can heal itself.

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Lim, Z. E., Duncan, H. F., Moorthy, A., & McReynolds, D. (2023). *Minimally invasive selective caries removal: a clinical guide. British Dental Journal*, 234(4), 233-240. Read here

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Barros, M. M. A. F., de Queiroz Rodrigues, M. I., Muniz, F. W. M. G., & Rodrigues, L. K. A. (2019). *Selective, stepwise, or nonselective removal of carious tissue: a systematic review and meta-analysis. Clinical Oral Investigations*, 24, 521-532.

Kettle, J., Marshman, Z., Hamilton, A., et al. (2025). *Dentists' perspectives on selective caries removal for deep carious lesions. BMC Oral Health*, 25, 362. Read here

Andrew Smith, DDS
SDS Editor

Thank You and Welcome!

The SDS Board of Directors met to recognize the service of the board and to thank Dr. Filipe Lima for his leadership as President this year, but he's not yet done with SDS leadership! Next year, Dr. Lima will be the SDS Immediate Past-President, a member of the Stanislaus Dental Foundation Board of Directors, and our BCR (board of component representative) to CDA.

Dr. Sirina Aguilar, the newest member of the board was welcomed as the incoming board Secretary for 2026.

A special certificate and gift was presented to Dr. Matt Swatman for his many years of leadership service as: SDS BOD, SDF BOD (still), CDA Trustee, BCR rep, and Ethics & Bylaw chair (still).

Your board has served you well representing the membership of SDS and dentistry in general.

Dr. Alexandra Hebert presenting the President's plaque to Dr. Filipe Lima

l. to r. Drs. Joe Kolody, Alexandra Hebert, Matt Swatman, Sirina Aguilar, Natalie Lenser, Christina Lee Zertuche, Filipe Lima, Andrew Smith, ED Robin Brown

Dr. Matt Swatman accepting a certificate for his many years of service.

House of Delegates—The House of Delegates is the policy-setting body of CDA, representing all members of the association. The house meets annually to set strategic direction on matters of dental policy and practice, elect officers of the association, establish membership dues, and act on recommended bylaws changes.

Drs. Filipe Lima and Joe Kolody participated as Delegates

Drs. Christina Lee Zertuche, Andrew Smith, Matt Swatman, and Elizabeth Demichelis participated as Alternate Delegates

Robin Brown participated as...Executive Director

Drs. Demichelis, Kolody, Lima, Lee Zertuche, Smith, Swatman, and ED Robin

Dr. Filipe Lima

Yes, there is fun as well! Fiesta Party!

Robin's Relevant Remarks

What a year, what a year! We've all been inundated with so much information; political theatre, AI, them vs. them... But through it all, in our microcosm, we're still here taking care of our members and their dental team. Practice support, CE courses, free membership meetings, Shred-it event and a member mixer, peer interaction...this is what membership brings. You can look forward to even more next year!

For many of you, it's time to renew your tripartite membership. CDA has instituted a new rule stating that members who don't renew by their deadline will be dropped from membership and will have to sign up again as a new member losing all past years of membership in the tripartite. This may affect members who could lose their future Life Active status when they turn 65 with 35 years of continuous membership. Not renewing would also compromise coverage with TDIC and being a provider with the Stanislaus Medical/Dental Foundation. Don't let this happen!

We are looking for members to be part of the SDS editorial committee and work with Editor Dr. Andrew Smith and I to add more value to the SDS bi-annual APEX newsletter. Being a general dentist can be most helpful but we can add specialists to the committee to make a more robust team. Committee work does not require a lot of time as there are only two publications a year and communication can be done between emails, text, and Zoom. If you are interested, please contact me at the office!

Stanislaus has been quite fortunate to have an amazing Board of Directors exhibiting incredible leadership and speaking up for the rights of our members and dentistry in general. You can look forward to continued excellent leadership in the years ahead!

We look forward to seeing many of you at next year's events. You are the lifeblood of Stanislaus and we value your membership! The benefits of belonging to organized dentistry are many. It takes a dental village to protect your chosen profession. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity!

We hope this holiday season brings you, your dental team, and those you love a time of peace, joy, and relaxation.

Robin Brown / Executive Director

So proud to be a part of...

...SDS members (and team) preserving the dental health of the earth's population, one patient at a time!

The objective of the Stanislaus Dental Society shall be:

To encourage the improvement of the oral health of the public,
to promote the art and science of dentistry,
to encourage the maintenance of high standards of
professional competence and practice,
and to represent the interests of the members of the
dental profession and the public which it serves.

Modesto Junior College Dental Assisting Program:

MJC Clinical Education Partnership updates

by Joy Brack, RDA, Lead Instructor

I am pleased to share that final grades for Semester One of our 2025–2026 Dental Assisting cohorts have been completed. I am very proud of the effort and commitment demonstrated by our students throughout these first 16 weeks.

December 2 marks the first day of Semester Two, and I am looking forward to the continued growth, skill development, and opportunities awaiting our students in the weeks ahead.

Our program maintained an exceptional attendance retention rate of **99.30%** (15 students × 48 days = 720 total student-days; 5 absences = 715/720).

Semester One Retention & Performance

Karla and I are proud to report that the lowest final grade earned in the cohort was an **83%** and **all students who began the program are continuing into Semester Two**, reflecting a **100% retention rate** with no drops or dismissals. This continued success reinforces the value of our student interview and assessment process, and I appreciate the Workforce team's support of this important step.

Externship Update

Students are nearing the end of their first 10-week clinical rotation, and all students are on track to complete their required hours.

By week five, each student received an evaluation from their office site supervisor. We are happy to share that one student has already been offered a position and two additional students have been identified as potential hires following graduation.

We did experience two minor injuries due to a lack of provided PPE. This served as a valuable reminder of the importance of strict compliance with protective equipment and infection control protocols. We appreciate Dr. Demichelis and her time for meeting with our students to reinforce these essential safety practices.

I am currently working on the schedule for Rotation Two, which will begin immediately following the holiday break.

MJC recently received a generous donation from one of our community dentists enabling us to begin capturing high-quality intraoral images using CEREC technology. We are excited to integrate this advancement into our program. We appreciate donations to our students/program to continue modern dental dentistry!

This concludes our Semester One outcomes and program updates. Thank you for your ongoing support of our dental team, our students, and our shared mission to prepare highly skilled, professional dental assistants for our community. I truly appreciate all that you do.

Warmest Regards,

(Joy) Rejoice Brack, RDA, Instructor
Brackr@yosemite.edu

SDS Members by the Number
Total: 275
Market Share: 82.6%
(Total # of dentists in Stanislaus County who are members of the tripartite (ADA, CDA, SDS)
Active – 184
(Recent graduate-Reduced dues members)
RD1 – 8 / RD2 – 9 / RD3 – 12
Life Active – 23 / Life Retired – 36
Retired – 2 / Permanently disabled - 1
Non-members in county - 62

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from
Dr Joy Lin

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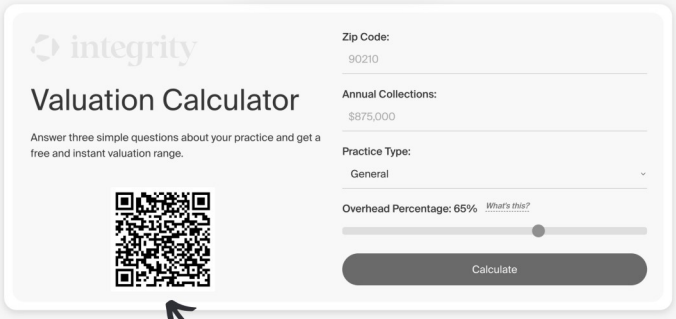

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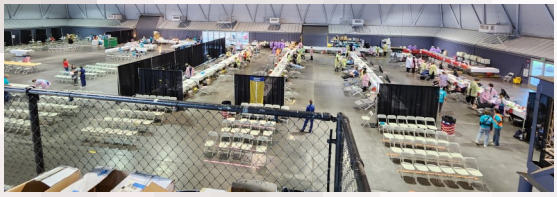
Member Community Spotlight

SDS Members Dr. Elizabeth Demichelis, Dr. Peter Soderstrom, and ED Robin Brown volunteered at the October Sacramento California Careforce clinic serving patients with dental (fillings, extractions, dentures), medical (exams, screening, education), and vision (exams, screening, prescription glasses) needs. Altogether 3,032 patients received free care valued at more than $900k!

Many dental volunteers had previously participated in past CDA Cares events so it made this event extra special to serve beside familiar, friendly people with a serving heart!

Dr. Demichelis, patient, interpreter

Sacramento member, John Pisacane and Dr. Demichelis



Pre-clinic and clinic in action!

Robin standing in front of the so many donated prescription glasses. As a member of the Lions Club, this made her extra happy!

Dr. Soderstrom and crew, "So, how do they feel?"

Dr. Soderstrom and crew serving denture patients

Over the Edge! with Dr. Jacob Barber

The LearningQuest-Stanislaus Literacy Center held a fundraising event in October and SDS member Dr. Jacob Barber rappelled Over the Edge on behalf of the Modesto Children's Museum. Yikes!

Looks What's Coming!

OSHA/Infection Control

Nancy Dewhirst, RDH, BS

Virtual course by Zoom

Wednesday, January 21

6:00pm – 9:00pm—3 Hours Core CEU's

Dental Practice Act

Nancy Dewhirst, RDH, BS

Virtual course by Zoom

Thursday, January 22

6:00—8:00pm-2 hours Core CEU's

Products & Protocols for the Win

Dr. Troy Schmedding

Friday, March 27

8:00am – 1:30pm (5 Hours Core CEU's)

Papapolloni Bistro—2501 McHenry Ave. Modesto

Reduce Risk of Theft in Your Dental Practice with Employee and Accounting Controls

December 5, 2025

Theft within dental practices is surprisingly common and it's on the rise. Review your bookkeeping structure and implement accounting measures to greatly reduce the probability of falling victim to employee embezzlement, while communicating to employees that you are paying close attention.

Being the victim of theft is bad enough, but when that theft is perpetrated by a trusted member of your dental team, it's especially harrowing. Unfortunately, theft within dental practices is surprisingly common and it's on the rise.

One of the most common types of theft in the dental office is staff embezzlement. In the 2023 book "Healers Versus Stealers," author David Harris asserts that dentistry is the most often embezzled profession, with more than $1 billion losses per year in the United States. A **survey** released in 2020 by the American Dental Association found that 48% of respondents had been the victim of embezzlement — a 13% jump from a decade prior. Surprisingly, 46% of responding practice owners had been victimized more than once.

Payroll Theft: A Case Study

One case reported to The Dentists Insurance Company involved a practice owner who oversaw two offices that were largely operated by associate dentists. He hired a bookkeeper to work for both offices. The owner became aware of possible wrongdoing after receiving a call from the bank alerting him of suspicious signatures on his company checks. Apparently, the bookkeeper had attempted to intercept the alert from the bank, but she could not successfully answer the account security questions. The bank called the office again after the employee abruptly ended the call.

The insured learned that the employee had been using a signature stamp on the checks to provide herself bonuses and cash advances. She listed herself as an employee on the payroll of each office to receive duplicate paychecks. She also used her company credit card to make personal purchases for herself and pay expenses for her husband's business as well as taking cash advances at a local casino. The employee then used company checks to pay credit card bills, which she allowed to incur late and over-limit fees.

The owner filed a police report, and the employee was prosecuted and ordered to pay restitution. As the former employee no longer had assets or a job, the dentist could not recover any funds beyond those covered by insurance.

Employee Controls

Dental practices are typically tight-knit workplaces built on trust and camaraderie. Practice owners put their trust in their staff, especially those who have employed many years. However, long-term employees are the most likely to be engaged in theft or embezzlement. The ADA survey found that nearly 40% of employees accused of stealing had been with the practice for four years or more. These are typically employees who handle accounts receivable, accounts payable and banking functions.

Telltale behaviors to watch for include:

- **Possessiveness about duties and reluctance to cross-train.**Dishonest employees must keep illicit activities hidden so they typically refuse to delegate duties or share responsibilities. They can also be territorial about their workspace.
- **Coming in early/working late.** "Ever-present" employees aren't always just hard workers. This can be a warning sign, as thieves need time in the office away from prying eyes, often before staff has arrived in the morning or after everyone has left at night.
- **Refusal to take vacation.** Illicit activity often surface when the perpetrator takes extended leave and another employee fills in. Asking to cash in vacation or skipping it altogether is a red flag.
- **Complaints about finances.** Frustrated employees who are always short on cash or those facing unexpected expenses are the most likely to commit fraud. Another red flag is an employee who appears to live well beyond their means.

Other best practices, such as conducting dentist-to-dentist reference checks before hiring and cross-training employees for multiple duties, can help prevent dishonest behaviors.

(cont. Page 12)

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Accounting Controls

Implementing accounting controls thwarts potential employee embezzlement. Unfortunately, many dentists inadvertently put their practices at risk for fraud by trusting a single employee with financial responsibility or not reviewing accounts payable and receivable.

Cases reported to TDIC show instances of employees deleting appointment and ledger entries, endorsing patient checks to personal accounts, forging payroll checks, modifying payroll, misappropriating credit cards and using signature stamps without authorization. In some instances, employees have even redirected funds from dentists' merchant account to their personal accounts or issued phony refunds to a personal account.

In more sophisticated schemes, employees fabricate fictitious vendors, create nonexistent employees, receive kickbacks from patients or from vendors for awarding company contracts or even coerce subordinate employees to carry out theft.

TDIC Risk Management Advice Line analysts point out that simply reviewing your bookkeeping structure and implementing accounting measures will greatly reduce the probabilities of falling victim to employee theft. Instituting controls also communicates to employees that you are paying attention and discourages even the thought of stealing.

Other accounting controls to include:

- Delegate financial tasks among employees, such as opening incoming mail and data entry for deposit and receivable information, to minimize opportunities for an employee to manipulate account information.
- Separate job functions of reviewing monthly bank statements, entering online payments and preparing monthly bank reconciliations. If you have multiple authorized signers, separate the job functions of preparing the checks and signing the checks reduces risk.
- Request that the bank mail statements to your home or personal email address and review statements regularly for unusual accounts-payable names or inconsistencies.
- Secure company checks in a location accessible only to authorized employees.
- Require supporting documentation (a vendor invoice or credit card statement, for example) for every check you sign and review it to ensure expenditures are justified.
- Run an accounts-payable history to review invoice numbers and amounts.
- Provide specific instructions or guidelines to your bank that include a list of approved vendors and authorized signers.
- Watch for an increase in patient refunds, adjustments or bad-debt write-offs. An unusual number of accounts turned over to collections or a decline in the gross income or practice profitability is suspicious. Discrepancies between accounts receivable records and patient statements should also be suspect.
- Watch for increases in patient complaints regarding their accounts, which could indicate fraudulent activity or the need to develop a policy clarifying account procedures. Reviewing and responding to patients' concerns personally is recommended.
- Hire a practice software specialist to ensure security controls and work with a consultant to oversee changes in systems.
- Run an audit report on patient accounts to look for any unusual amounts of transactions where an account payment is posted and then the payment is reversed after the deposit has been processed.

TDIC policyholders can access more guidance on employee embezzlement, including methods, prevention strategies and recovery tips, by signing into their account to download the **Embezzlement Reference Guide**.

TDIC Commercial Property insurance provides Business Owner's policyholders coverage for employee dishonesty losses occurring within their practice. If the loss also involves the misappropriation of your identity, TDIC offers identity-theft recovery for the individual dentist under its **Professional Liability policy**.

If you suspect you may have been the victim of embezzlement, contact your professional insurance carrier immediately. TDIC policyholders have access to trained analysts who will discuss the situation and next steps, including best practices for documenting the fraud.

TDIC's Risk Management Advice Line *is a benefit to TDIC policyholders. To schedule a consultation with an experienced risk management analyst,* ***visit tdicinsurance.com/RMconsult*** *or call 1.877.269.8844.*

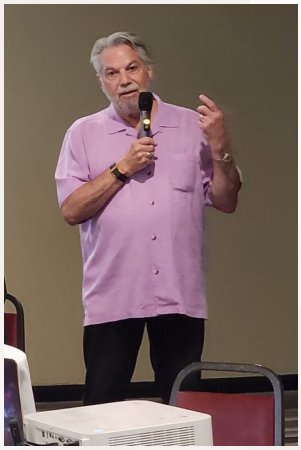
And unto this world….

Evander Villa Hebert born to Enrique and Dr. Alexandra Hebert, August 16

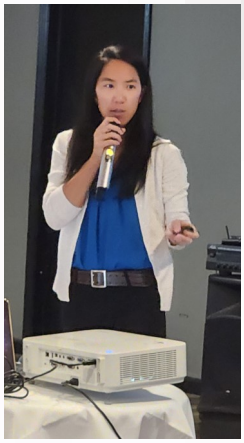
Congratulations!

Pearls of the Practice

A full house attended our annual Pearls of the Practice continuing education course. Thank you to our SDS members who stepped up to share their knowledge!



Dr. Ron Champion



Dr. Christina Lee Zertuche

Dr. Clarke Filippi

Dr. Jacob Barber

Thank you to our exhibitors!

Integrity Practice Sales, Merrill Lynch/BofA, Shofu

How to fill the patient schedule in the dental practice

Patient follow-up, recall booking, confirmation protocols, case acceptance rate and marketing all factor into your analysis

Reprinted with permission from California Dental Association

A recent survey conducted by the ADA's Health Policy Institute showed that 35% of dentists felt they were not busy enough and would like to see more patients.

If you identify with the 35%, this guidance is for you.

"Even though practices may operate a little differently or experience different situations, there are steps you can take to fill your schedule," says CDA Practice Management Analyst Matthew Nelson, who co-developed the guidance with his fellow analysts. Read on for help identifying ways to increase your patient count. The suggestions do not cover every possible scenario, and each item may not be applicable to every situation.

Maximize your current patient base: Reporting, follow-up and referrals

"Look first for missed opportunities with your current patient base," Nelson recommends. "Are they receiving your full focus?"

These are the patients who have joined your practice over time and built a strong, trusting relationship with you, but patients can fall through the cracks easily when you only see them a couple of times a year.

Familiarize yourself with your practice management software reporting and make sure none of your patients has unintentionally dropped out of your system. Critical reports to review include the past-due recall list and incomplete treatment list. But you might also follow up with patients you referred to colleagues and who may have failed to complete treatment, such as a patient referred to an endodontist who may not have come back to complete the crown. Check in with your practice management software customer service team if you need assistance pulling these reports.

- Expert tip: Assign each report to a team member, set a reasonable goal (10-20 patients contacted per week), and follow up on their results in weekly recap meetings. If patients state they are not coming back, be sure to inactivate them in your system.

Beyond reporting, follow-up and referrals, you can use your current patients as a low-cost marketing resource. Do you ask your patients for referrals? They may not know that you are looking for new patients.

Nelson says the marketing can be as simple as "Mrs. Smith, we just love seeing patients like you. You may not be aware, Your hygiene/recall patient rebooking percentage also requires scrutiny. "Ideally, you are re-booking a minimum of 90% of your patients for their recall visit before they leave the practice," Nelson says. "Anyone not re-booked is at risk of falling out of your system and falling behind on their dental care because this method relies on patients remembering they are due for care."

but we are accepting new patients and would love it if you would refer your friends and neighbors."

However, remember that you cannot give gifts for new patient referrals but you can send thank you cards. Read more about marketing strategies later.

Review operational systems: Confirmation protocols, hygiene/recall booking

Any review of a practice's operational systems should begin with the cancellation and no-show rate. "If your cancellations are higher than 10%, dig into the reasons why," Nelson advises.

Ensure you have a strong confirmation protocol in place. Are you capturing patient phone numbers, obtaining text confirmation consent and collecting email addresses? Are you asking your patients for their preferred method of communication? Do you have a structured and consistent system? Nelson recommends contacting the patient three times: two weeks prior to the appointment, two days prior and the day before.

"If patients do not confirm, consider using verbiage like, "Dr. Stark reserved an hour of her time for your care. We'd kindly appreciate confirmation that you'll be here for the appointment," Nelson offers.

(cont. Page 16)

(cont. from Page 15)

One recommended approach is to pre-book the appointment for the same day of the week and timeframe as their current visit. If the patient is reluctant, consider using verbiage like, “I understand that we may need to change this date or time in the future, but I want to make sure we keep you on the schedule for your next exam and cleaning. With your permission, I would like to book you for the same day and time six months from now.”

Lastly, review your case-acceptance percentage. Reports available on your practice management software will show you how much diagnosed treatment remains unscheduled. By reviewing your case acceptance rate, streamlining your patient communication protocols and role-playing common patient objections in your team meetings, you can improve your case acceptance and potentially fill in some of the gaps on your schedule.

Expert tip: CDA’s member-only resources can help you meet your goals by assessing cancellations, recall patient rebooking rate, case acceptance and more. Use Top 10 KPIs: Investigative Questions to assess your systems.

Review your marketing strategy: Goals, ideas, implementation and tracking

Once you have ensured that you are maximizing your current patient base and confirmed that you are systematically strong in your processes, the next step would be to review your marketing strategy and evaluate if the money you’re spending is working for you.

1. Identify your goals: Are you looking to fill the schedule, grow the practice to add another provider or simply replace the natural attrition that happens?

Review the demographics and the large employer groups in your community: Make sure the marketing strategy fits your local community and your patient base. For instance, are you in a community composed mostly of large families or young working professionals? Where will your audience see your marketing? (Will social media ads or mailers be more effective?) Would it make sense to try some business-to-business marketing?

1. Determine your new patient goal and break it down by the number of new patients needed each day, week and month. Collaborate with your team on ideas for reaching these goals so everyone is working together.

2. Identify a plan: Start with internal marketing utilizing patient referrals, as described earlier. Are you promoting your practice and website using search engine optimization (SEO), social media advertising and/or social media presence through a marketing company? Consider sponsoring or attending community events to engage with your local community. Similarly, dentists can sponsor local sports teams, offer oral hygiene instructions at local schools or provide table days for large employers. “You could even host an after-hours mixer at your office with your local chamber of commerce and do office tours,” Nelson offers.

Expert tip: Stay involved in your marketing strategy. For example, create a calendar that lists ideas for events and social media post ideas, and when new patients call the practice, ask how they heard about you so you can track the most effective ideas. If asking over the phone doesn’t feel natural, collect that information on their new patient paperwork. Follow up by thanking them for coming in.

Member Mixer—Skewers












Fair Thee Well, Good Sirs!

Donald R. Swatman, DDS

01/18/1934-11/24/2025

Endodontist

In practice 01/01/1946-11/01/2001

Obituary

Sam Paregian, DDS

08/02/1927-12/03/2025

General Dentist

In practice 01/01/1966-12/03/2025

Obituary

Six ways smart office management can strengthen the whole dental practice

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***eAssist,** a CDA Endorsed Service for dental billing and claims processing, shares insights dentists and office managers can use to improve practice systems*

An empowered dental office manager is the backbone of a thriving practice. Balancing patient care, practice efficiency and complex revenue cycles takes focus, communication and clear systems. When these elements work together, the entire practice benefits – from smoother days and happier patients to stronger overall performance.

The experts at **eAssist**, CDA's Endorsed Services partner for dental billing and claims processing solutions, have pinpointed six areas where dental practice leaders and office managers can collaborate to strengthen practice systems.

1. Consistent scheduling

Offices that confirm appointments early, track cancellation patterns and prioritize reliable patients experience fewer gaps in the day. A predictable, productive schedule ensures that the team stays focused and the doctor is on time. This efficiency boosts patient confidence in the practice's professionalism.

2. Benefit verification

Dental benefit verification may seem routine, but it can have big impacts if it gets off track. Confirming coverage before appointments helps the team set accurate expectations with patients and prevents claim delays or denials later. Clear, upfront verification supports consistent cash flow and builds patient trust through transparency.

3. Smooth communication

Whether it's a quick morning huddle, a clear handoff between the front and back office or a consistent tone in patient outreach, straightforward communication reduces confusion and creates a better patient experience. When everyone speaks the same language, effective teamwork and patient satisfaction follow.

4. A focus on the front end

Many billing and reimbursement issues start long before the claim is sent. Getting the details right during scheduling, documentation and claim preparation saves time and hassle later. Confirm provider credentialing, double-check procedures and review claims before submission to help prevent denials and maintain steady revenue.

5. Clear financial policies

Specific, straightforward policies protect patients and the practice. Written guidelines for payments, financing and credit terms ensure everyone understands what to expect. When the whole team communicates fees and options the same way, conversations remain professional and patients feel more respected and informed.

6. Collaborative leadership

A strong office manager connects the clinical and administrative sides of the practice, helping both stay focused on shared goals. When the office manager and doctor lead as aligned partners, the team stays motivated and the practice grows with purpose.

A well-run dental office doesn't just depend on systems. It depends on support. eAssist Dental Solutions helps CDA member practices strengthen those systems, improve billing accuracy and simplify revenue management so teams can focus on patient care.

To discover how **eAssist** can help your office operate more efficiently and productively, request a free copy of "The Dental Office Manager's Playbook" or schedule a consultation with an eAssist expert.

In addition to the endorsement of **eAssist**, CDA offers members the following complementary resources along with expert guidance to support you with improved efficiencies. Sign in to access:

Financial agreement and consent form

Verification and explanation of dental benefit coverage

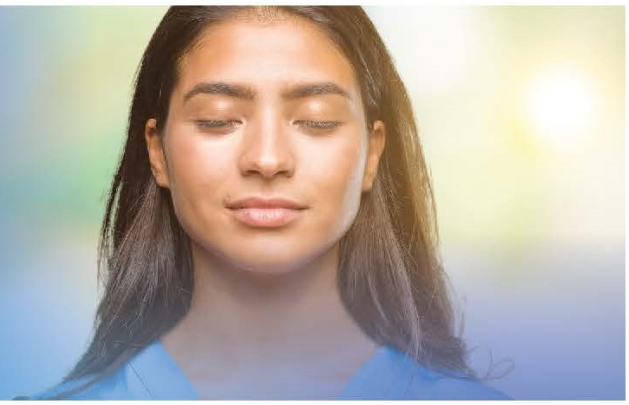
Visit cda.org for more information.

The following sponsors provide financial support to the Stanislaus Dental Society's continuing education course program which helps us bring quality speakers for your knowledge enrichment. Please support their generosity by asking them about what they can do to help your practice!

DENNEHY DENTAL SUPPLY 4725 Greenleaf Circle • Modesto, CA 95356 Nick Dennehy ndennehy43@yahoo.com	INTEGRITY PRACTICE SALES Jose Virrueta jose@integritypracticesales.com	Merrill Lynch Bank of America Corporation Shaun Joseph shaun.joseph@ml.com
SHOFU Shofu Dental Corporation Carrie Maggard cmaggard@shofu.com	cda	tdic

ADA®

WELLNESS RESOURCES FROM THE COUNCIL ON DENTAL PRACTICE



Explore **ADA.org/Wellness** for articles, courses, videos and other resources across these health and well-being areas: mental health, physical health, opioid prescribing, and pregnancy.

Well-Being Index (WBI)
ADA.org/Well-BeingIndex

Your health matters. The ADA licensed the Dental Well-Being Index (WBI) — the validated risk assessment tool invented by the Mayo Clinic and used by hundreds of health care organizations — for every Member. Log into your ADA account first. Then, set-up your WBI account. The WBI takes one minute to complete and you will see your own personal dashboard and resources. You can track your well-being over time.

ADA Dentist Well-Being Program Directory
(updated in 2023)
ADA.org/WellnessDirectory

This Well-Being Program Directory provides a list of healthcare professionals in each state who will serve as a point of contact and offer support during a time of need. This is part of the ADA mission to enhance the personal and professional lives of our members for the betterment of the dental team and the patients they serve.

After a Suicide Postvention Toolkit
ADA.org/Postvention

September is national suicide prevention awareness month. *After a Suicide: A Guide for Dental Workplaces* was developed in 2023 by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) and the American Dental Association (ADA). This resource reflects learnings in responding to a suicide death for professional dental settings.

ADA Ergonomic Stretches
ADA.org/Stretch

Better ergonomics can improve your practice — daily stretching and exercise, can help dental practitioners and their team enjoy long, healthy careers. Download the ADA Ergonomics Stretches infographic today, including 25 quick stretches, to keep you and your dental team healthy.

ADA Wellness Videos
ADA.org/WellnessVideos

Visit ADA's Wellness Playlist on our YouTube channel to watch new, short promotional videos on:

- ADA Dentist Well-Being Program Directory
- 2-part Resilience Webinar courses in ADA CE Online
- ADA Opioid Prescribing Resources

 Updated: 2/22/2024

ADA Practice Institute · Center for Dental Practice | dentalpractice@ada.org

Dental Board of California Recent Updates

Date: December 16, 2025

Health care providers who report controlled substances should be aware of a new law going into effect next year regarding testosterone or mifepristone.

Assembly Bill (AB) 82, effective January 1, 2026, prohibits reporting a prescription for or the dispensing of testosterone or mifepristone to the Controlled Substance Utilization and Evaluation System (CURES) or to the Department of Justice's contracted prescription data processing vendor, currently Bamboo Health. Existing records for testosterone or mifepristone will be removed from CURES on or before January 1, 2027.

For more information about CURES, visit https://oag.ca.gov/cures.

Date: December 5, 2025

Fraud Alert—The Dental Board of California (Board) has received reports of scammers impersonating Board staff via phone and letters. These fraudulent communications may:

- Claim your license is suspended or under investigation
- Demand immediate payment or personal information
- Use spoofed phone numbers or official-looking letterhead

What You Need to Know:

- The Board will never demand payment or sensitive information over the phone.
- Official correspondence will always come from verified Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) or Board channels.
- Scammers may threaten arrest or license revocation—these are scare tactics.

How to Protect Yourself:

- Do not provide personal or financial information.
- Refuse demands for payment.
- Hang up immediately if the call seems suspicious.
- Verify any communication by contacting the DBC directly through our Contact Us page.

Report Suspicious Activity:

- Send a message to the Board.
- If the caller is stating they are from DEA, report the scam to the FBI using the DEA's Extortion Scam online reporting form.
- If the phone number of the caller appears to be the Board's telephone number, it is recommended that you submit an online complaint with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) using the FCC's Consumer Complaint form.

Date: November 14, 2025

Examination blackout period November 2025-August 2026 for Registered Dental Assist in Extended Functions

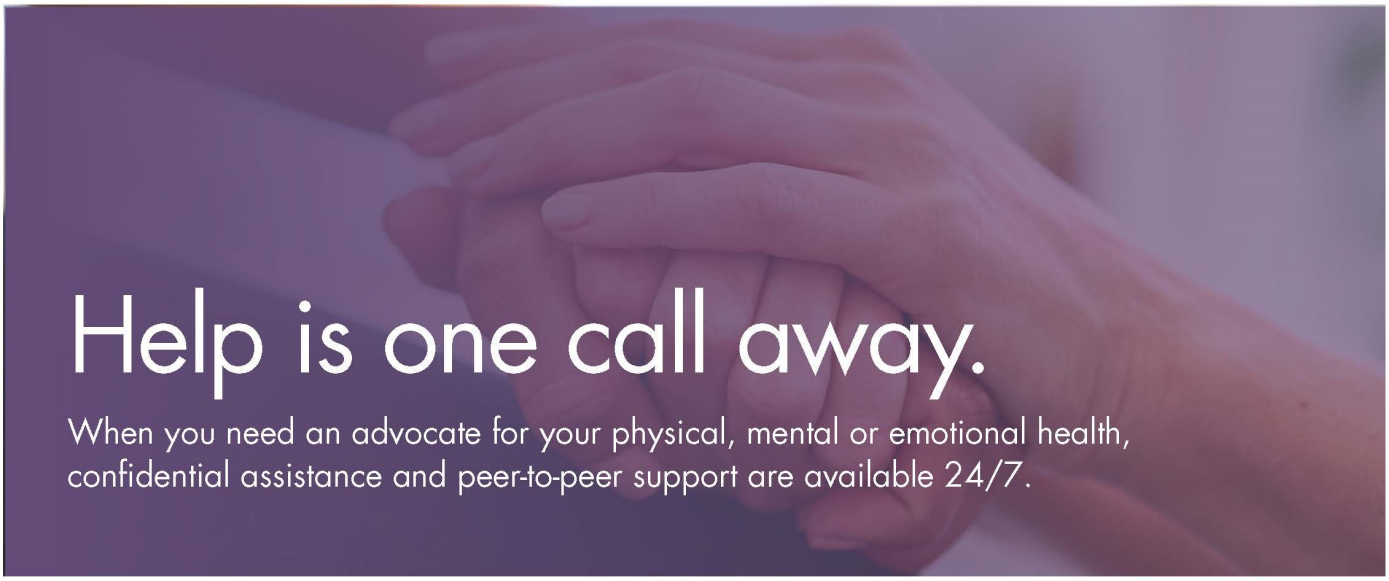
Effective November 14, 2025, the Board will be implementing an examination blackout period for the Registered Dental Assistant in Extended Functions (RDAEF) Examination to review and perform maintenance on the examination. The examination blackout period will be from approximately November 14, 2025 to July 31, 2026.

Important Blackout Period Information

During the examination blackout period, the Board will continue to accept applications for licensure eligibility and examinations, but applicants will not be able to register for or take an examination during the blackout.

2026 SDS Calendar of Events

January	1-2	Thurs-Fri	New Years Day (office closed)
	9	Friday	BLS renewal
	13	Tuesday	SDS Board of Directors meeting
	19	Monday	Martin Luther King Day (Fed holiday/office closed)
	21	Wednesday	CE course-*OSHA/IC-virtual*
	22	Thursday	CE course-*DPA-virtual*
February	6	Friday	BLS renewal
	16	Monday	President's Day (office closed)
	19	Thursday	General Membership Meeting-*Labor Law Updates*
March	3	Tuesday	SDS Board of Directors meeting
	6	Friday	BLS renewal
	27	Friday	CE course-Dr. Troy Schmedding
April	3	Friday	BLS renewal
	16	Thursday	SDS Member Mixer - Shred-it
May	1	Friday	BLS renewal
	12	Tuesday	SDS Board of Directors meeting
	14-16	Thurs-Sat	CDA Presents-LAX
	21	Thursday	SDS General Membership Meeting-*Risk Mgmt*
	25	Monday	Memorial Day (Fed holiday/office closed)
June	5	Friday	BLS renewal
	8th-12th	Mon-Fri	Annual Symposium
	19	Friday	Juneteenth (office closed)
July	3	Friday	Independence Day celebrated (office closed)
	14	Tuesday	SDS Board of Directors meeting
August	21	Friday	CE-Pearls of the Practice
September	7	Monday	Labor Day (office closed)
	8	Tuesday	SDS Board of Directors meeting
October	12	Monday	Columbus Day (office closed)
	16	Friday	CE course-TBD
November	10	Thursday	SDS Board of Directors meeting
	11	Wednesday	Veteran's Day (office closed)
	13-14	Fri-Sat	HOD-LAX (office closed)
	26-27	Thurs-Fri	Thanksgiving holiday (office closed)
December	Dec 24-Jan 1	Thurs-Fri	Winter Holiday - (office closed)



Help is one call away.

When you need an advocate for your physical, mental or emotional health, confidential assistance and peer-to-peer support are available 24/7.

CDA's Wellness Program is a member benefit that supports and advocates for the mental, emotional, and physical wellness of dental professionals and their families. The Wellness Program is led by compassionate volunteer members and recovering dentists with the assistance of dental society staff and allied health professionals.

This trusted resource extends help in a variety of ways, offering support to family members of impaired individuals and providing assistance following diagnosis and/or treatment.

Whether your wellness challenge is anxiety, depression, mental illness, physical illness or substance dependence, our volunteer members are available around the clock to offer confidential peer-to-peer support while you navigate your wellness journey.

As a dentist, you likely balance many roles: healthcare provider, team leader, employer and colleague. Work-related stress can result in burnout, putting you at risk for depression. Some signs that you may need support to regain balance are:

- Weight loss or gain
- Social isolation
- Insomnia
- Anxiety
- Apathy
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Thoughts of self-harm or suicide

For more information regarding the Wellness Program or for a confidential referral, please contact your local dental society or a Wellness Committee near you:

Visit **cda.org/wellness-program** to learn more.

Northern California
530.898.0821

San Francisco/Bay Area
209.601.4410

Central California
916.947.5676

Southern California
310.487.5040

San Diego
562.832.2489

California Dental Association
1201 K Street, 14th Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814
800.232.7645 | cda.org

Resources for Managing the Dental Team Guidelines for Practice Success

We have compiled online resources for Guidelines for Practice Success, Managing the Dental Team to make it easier for you to locate the additional information, samples, and resources discussed throughout the module.

Background checks [PDF]

Benefits primer [PDF]

Checklist policy manual [PDF]

Checklist retention schedule [PDF]

Compensation analysis [PDF]

Dental assistant [PDF]

Dental hygienist [PDF]

Job analysis worksheet [PDF]

Maternity leave [PDF]

New hire checklist [PDF]

New hire checklist 2 [PDF]

Office manager [PDF]

Professional personal references [PDF]

Reference form [PDF]

Salary reviews [PDF]

Staff training topics [PDF]

Telephone screening [PDF]

Tips manage all employees [PDF]

Tips manage new employees [PDF]

Waiver background check [PDF]

View the full content of the Guidelines for Practice Success

Practice Support Team

When you need support navigating the business side of dentistry, CDA's experienced analysts can answer your questions about practice management, dental benefit plans, employment practices and regulatory compliance. Meet the team who have created a full library of online resources, speak on timely topics and provide one-on-one guidance by email and phone.

Ann Milar—*Director, Practice Support* ann.milar@cda.org 916.554.7324

Ann provides strategic direction for Practice Support's resources and initiatives while leading the team of expert analysts. She is also responsible for identifying and analyzing emerging issues for policy development and implementation on behalf of CDA's 27,000 member dentists. Ann has worked with CDA for more than 15 years and her health care experience spans 20 years of working with associations, health plans and advocacy organizations.

Jenell Bell-*Associate Analyst* Jenell.bell@cda.org 916.554.4986

Jenell has worked in the dental industry for over nine years, which has included managing multiple practices. Jenell uses her experience and passion for customer service to assist CDA members in the areas of compliance and employment.

Katie Fornelli—*Senior Practice Management Analyst* katie.fornelli@cda.org 916.554.5308

Katie specializes in dental practice management and marketing. For more than 18 years, she's worked with dentists and their teams in areas such as scheduling, collections, front office systems, case presentation, patient management, practice transitions, and dental practice marketing.

Lisa Greer, *Dental Benefits Analyst* lisa.greer@cda.org 916.554.5953

Lisa specializes in several aspects of dentistry, including working with dental benefit plans, dental billing, accounts receivable, community marketing, human resources, practice management and regulatory compliance. As a Practice Analyst, she brings more than 20 years of dental industry experience to CDA, including having served as a regional collections specialist for a dental support organization that supported 70-plus California offices.

Matthew Nelson, *Practice Analyst* matthew.nelson@cda.org 916.554.4940

With over seven years of experience as an office manager, dental consultant and CDA analyst, Matt specializes in all areas of practice management, including leadership, practice systems, dental billing, human resources and practice transitions.

Michelle Coker, PHR, PHRca, *Employment Practices Analyst* michelle.coker@cda.org 916.554.4968

As a certified employment law expert, Michelle specializes in assisting members with employment practices, including employee management, policy development and employment law compliance. Her time spent in private practice as an office manager gives her a unique view into the dynamics of a dental practice. Since joining CDA in 2006, Michelle has utilized over three decades of dental experience to support dentists and their practices.

Miguel Mariona, *Analyst, Dental Benefits and Practice Management* miguel.mariona@cda.org 916.554.4936

Miguel has over 10 years of dental experience from working with dental benefit plans in various roles, including customer service and provider relations, as well as managing a dental practice. Miguel's passion for providing exceptional service is evident in his commitment to CDA members when addressing their dental benefit and practice management challenges.

Teresa Pichay, CHPC, *Senior Regulatory Compliance Analyst* teresa.pichay@cda.org 916.554.5990

Teresa specializes in regulatory compliance, including information verification, documentation strategies and referral to legal references. For more than 26 years, she's worked with CDA members in the areas of occupational and environmental safety and health, HIPAA, California Dental Practice Act and other business regulations.

Tiffiny Glass, *Project Resource Coordinator* tiffiny.glass@cda.org 916.554.4914

As the project resource coordinator, Tiffiny brings a positive and optimistic attitude while delivering and maintaining a high level of service and support to CDA members and CDA member-clients through Practice Support and its supporting website. She has over 10 years of experience working in marketing, specializing in customer care.

Welcome New Members!

Manjinder Dhaliwal, DDS

General Dentist
Smile Bright Family Dentistry
1925 N St Ste E, Newman
VA Med, Fresno ‘20

Guillermina Preciado Meza, DDS

General Dentist
Turlock Children’s Dentistry
3960 Geer Rd, Turlock
Universidad De La Salle ‘24

Breanna Morgan, DDS

General Dentist
Blackhart, Albertoni & Corso Dentistry
1419 W. F St., Oakdale
UOP S.F. ‘25

Dalila Deniz-Perez, DDS

General Dentist— new grad
No known practice address
Universidad De La Salle ‘25

Arfan Taba, DDS

General Dentist
No practice address
Instit de Medicina Bucharest ‘87

Jesus Castillo Torrez, DDS

General Dentist
Family & Kids Dental
3125 Coffee Rd. Ste 1
Modesto
University of Maryland Baltimore College of Dental Surgery ‘22