



# Mega - Bites

A Quarterly E-Newsletter free to subscribers through the Tennessee Dental Assistants' Association webpage at <http://www.tndaa.org>

Volume 1, Number 3

Fall, 2005

## TNDAA NEEDS YOUR HELP!

The Tennessee Dental Assistant Association is preparing for next year's legislative session and we need your help. Although issue preparation is of key importance to any legislative agenda, membership involvement (i.e. 'Grassroots') is vital to any successful year on Capitol Hill.

We need your help to recruit new members and to get to know your state elected officials. When you are invited to or read about a local event featuring your legislator, take some time to attend, introduce yourself personally, tell them what you do and that you would like to contact them during the legislative session. This type of one-on-one contact will help the TNDAA immensely when communicating opposition or support to legislation impacting dental assistants.

The TNDAA still plans to hold some local legislative meet and greets next year (an election year), but contact with your legislators NOW will help our industry before next August. If you have any questions, please call our legislative consultant, Jennifer Albrecht, at 615-394-1151. She will be more than happy to assist you.

## Excitement Grows as TNDAA Grows!

The TNDAA is proud to announce an increase in membership of almost 10% and the addition of 87 student members this quarter! Tell your friends to join us too! They will be glad you did!

And, if you haven't visited [www.tndaa.org](http://www.tndaa.org) lately, you might want to check out some new features. Take our survey, check out the latest district news, read periodic DANB reports. Soon we will open the TNDAA store and we plan to offer Free on-line CE to our members. Student Chapters will have the opportunity to link their pages to our site. Visit Often and share the excitement!

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## Spotlight on..... Mary Ellen Vaughn

This edition of Mega-Bites spotlights Mary Ellen Vaughn, CDA, RDA, BS. Mary Ellen is the Director of the ADA Accredited Dental Assistant program at the Tennessee Technology Center at Knoxville. Mary Ellen is the President of the Second District Dental Assistant's Society, with the largest membership of any district in the state. Her district offers incredible CE opportunities to its members. Mary Ellen is a life member of the ADA and is the current Secretary of the TNDAA. Mary Ellen has served as President of the TNDAA and has represented us several times as a delegate to the ADA Annual Session. We are fortunate to have the experience and dedication that Mary Ellen brings to our association! Thank you!

**TNDAA Board of Trustees  
Fall Conference Announced**

The TNDAA Board of Trustees will meet in Lebanon Tennessee, Saturday, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 11:00 am – 3:00 pm Central time, at the Country Inn and Suites. All members may attend but only the BOT may vote. Check <http://www.tndaa.org/events.html> for agenda items.



***Preventing Medical  
Errors  
in the Dental Office***

TNDAA will sponsor a 4 hour CE course titled “Preventing Medical Errors in the Dental Setting: A Guide for Protecting Your Patients and Your Practice” on May 20, 2006, at the TDA/TDAA Annual Session in Chattanooga, Medical errors have been identified as one of the nation’s leading causes of death and injury. This course addresses federal and state patient safety initiatives and their impact on dentistry. Practical applications for protecting both your patients and your practice from medical errors will be presented. Topics covered will include error reduction and prevention, patient safety laws and root cause analysis. In addition, participants will learn:

1. How to identify error-prone practices and behavior
2. Practical and innovative ideas for safety improvements
3. How to integrate patient safety in the dental office

Linda Harvey, RDH, MS, is a Licensed Healthcare Risk Manager and author of *Dental Risk Prevention and Dental Risk Prevention for Auxiliaries*. For additional information about Ms. Harvey or about Horizon Consulting Groups, Inc., visit [www.dentalriskprevention.com](http://www.dentalriskprevention.com)



**Board approved  
Dental Assistants  
Educational Courses  
Sponsored by the  
TNDAA**

***TNDAA members receive a discount!***

Coronal Polish \$195, \$165 for members  
December 2,3

Monitoring Nitrous Oxide \$125, \$100 for members  
November 18

Sealants \$125, \$100 for members  
November 19

Additional dates will be established to meet demand. For more information regarding location and times, and to register on-line go to [www.dentedonline.com](http://www.dentedonline.com)

**Continuing Education Requirements for  
Registered Dental Assistants**

The Board of Dentistry reports that “all registered dental assistants are required to fulfill 24 hours of continuing education, in subject matters pertaining to the delegable or assignable registered dental assistant duties or additional certifications (coronal polishing, etc.), during the two calendar year cycle (January 1 of an odd year – December 31 of an even year) and keep a current C.P.R. card at all times. A minimum of 2 of the required 24 biennial hours must be obtained in the area of chemical dependency education.”

**NOTE:** The CE requirements for DANB’s CDA renewal differ slightly. Visit [www.DANB.org](http://www.DANB.org) for details

**RDA’s Earn Advanced Placement for  
Health Services Management Degree**

Tennessee’s Registered Dental Assistants can now be awarded 24 semester credit hours of advanced placement toward an Associate of Science Degree in Health Services Management at Chattanooga State Technical Community College. Get that degree you’ve always wanted. Advance in your career! Create more career opportunities for yourself! Most of the courses are available online and some of the courses will even meet your Tennessee RDA CE requirements For more information visit [http://www.chattanoogastate.edu/business\\_information/HealthServiceManage.asp](http://www.chattanoogastate.edu/business_information/HealthServiceManage.asp) or contact [david.knopp@chattanoogastate.edu](mailto:david.knopp@chattanoogastate.edu)

Guest Article:

## Ways to Help a Dental Phobic Patient

By Olivia Mandri

For someone who is very anxious about visiting a dentist, just getting to the dentist's office can feel like an accomplishment. Even though this feeling can be overcome after some gentle coaxing (*sic*), a person who consciously or unconsciously avoids necessary dental work has developed a phobia that requires help from an experienced dentist. Many dentists specialize in treating patients who have dental phobia.

Some phobics would rather watch their teeth fall apart or live with pain than to step inside a dental office.

Unfortunately, many of these fears began after a bad childhood dental experience. Even though many phobics know their fears are irrational, the strength to get past the symptoms is harder than the actually thinking about what will happen. Some panic symptoms are as follows:

- Fainting
- Uncontrollable shaking
- Heart palpitations
- Nauseous feelings

Fear of losing control of a situation causes the most worry for most dental phobics feel. Fortunately, these symptoms are familiar to dentists who are trained in ways to comfort a patient. Below are ways that experienced dentists lead a patient through managing the fear:

1. Mention on the phone before your visit that you are apprehensive about seeing a dentist. Sympathetic dentists adjust visits to fit your pace. The first visit then is generally devoted to cleaning and not for surgical treatment.
2. To ease your anxiety and to relieve aches, several techniques can be used during treatment. Oral sedation, general anesthesia, inhalation sedation, psychotherapy and hypnosis are just a few ways. Alpha-Stim SCS is a new relaxation technique that passes an electric wave current through the brain from a hand-held control box connected to ear clips.
3. If treatment requires several phases, these phases can be spread out and scheduled based on how long you feel comfortable sitting in the chair.

Continued in next column

## Phobic Patient, Continued

4. Knowing that fear is a healthy survival mechanism is often the key to putting a phobic's fear into perspective
5. In many ways, the knowledge about what is actually going to take place rather than presumptions about potential pain is very much a sigh of relief. It's no surprise that if all someone hears is "If you don't behave, I'll take you to the dentist!" then that person soon builds preconceived notions that the dentist's must be a bad place.
6. A "painless practice" is the objective of a great dental practice. These dentists practice discomfort-reducing techniques. Thus, a patient can choose from several topicals like anesthetic gels and air abrasion units
7. Ask your dentists as many questions as necessary. Dentists in turn should ask you lots of questions like "Are you feeling this?" or "How are you doing?" A dentist uses these questions to know how fast to proceed or if you want a few minutes to regroup. A compassionate dentist will never force to you continue with dental work if you feel pain.
8. Follow up for a person who has a fear of dentists lets the person know that the dentist really does care. Along with a follow up call, many dentists offer remedies for aches after treatment such as ibuprofen or longer lasting anesthesia.

A source for finding a dentist that specializes in dental fears and phobias is 1-800-DENTIST  
[www.1800dentist.com](http://www.1800dentist.com).

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Olivia Mandri is the developer and manager of <http://www.fulldentist.com> Full Dentist a top online site for dentist related information for patients and professionals. For further details please visit her article archive: <http://www.fulldentist.com/>

**Editorial note:** Publication of articles submitted to and approved by the "Mega-Bites" Editorial Review Board does not imply endorsement of any particular products or service.

Guest Article

### Study Supports a National Career Ladder

Submitted by Sarah Atkinson, DANB's Project Writer

Defining a national career ladder for dental assistants that is based on one set of core dental assisting tasks, levels, and requirements will help states to address the following issues: access to oral health care; actions that influence recruitment, retention, and job satisfaction of dental assistants; public protection; and the increased mobility of the U.S. population.

In 2000, the Dental Assisting National Board, Inc. (DANB) teamed up with the American Dental Assistants Association (ADAA) to create the ADAA/DANB Alliance. One of the primary goals of this collaboration was to define and rank core dental assisting competencies (from most basic to most complex) in support of one national set of tasks, levels, and requirements, and to reinforce the concept of a viable career ladder for assistants.

To this end, the Alliance launched a Core Competency Study in March of 2002. A survey listing 70 tasks was sent to dentists, CDAs, non-Certified dental assistants, and dental assisting educators. Participants were asked to rate each task in terms of the training, education, and/or experience they believe should be (not what currently is) required to perform the task, and to rank it in one of four predefined categories of dental assisting, A through D, equivalent to: Entry Level (A), Dental Assistant (B), Certified Dental Assistant/Registered Dental Assistant (C), and Expanded Functions Dental Assistant (D).

These categories and related examinations and certifications supporting competency at each level are described in Table 1. (Continued in next column.)

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**Important Note:** The TNDA wishes to remind everyone that DANB considers the confidentiality of proprietary exam content to be a very serious matter and will not hesitate to pursue legal action against any person suspected of disclosing the content of DANB exams verbally or in writing, in a public forum or in private communications. DANB is developing an article with suggestions for assistants preparing to take the CDA or TNRDA exams, which will soon be published in a future issue of Mega-Bites.

### Study, continued

The Alliance's next step will be to develop a position paper that defines and rank orders core competencies for dental assistants and recommends minimum requirements for performing these functions. The position paper will be delivered to audiences including federal agencies such as the U.S. Surgeon General's office; state boards of dentistry, state dental associations, and organized dentistry groups such as the American Dental Association, the American Dental Education Association, and the Academy of General Dentistry.

*Recommended:* DANB's RHS and ICE exams, current CPR certification, basic dental assisting skills test.

For more information on the Core Competency Study or to read the complete list of tasks, visit the DANB website at [www.danb.org](http://www.danb.org).

### Table 1

#### Category A (2 tasks)

Most basic tasks (no minimum experience, training, education, or exam should be required).

#### Category B (33 tasks)

Low to moderate complexity tasks (requiring less than 2 + years full-time or 4 + years part-time dental assisting work experience or up to 12 months of formal education or training).

*Recommended:* DANB's RHS and ICE exams, current CPR certification, basic dental assisting skills test.

#### Category C (23 tasks)

Moderate complexity tasks (requiring 2+ years of part-time dental assisting work experience or at least 12 months of formal education or training).

*Recommended:* DANB's CDA exam, current CPR certification (or an equivalent state RDA exam, if developed according to generally accepted psychometric analysis).

#### Category D (4 tasks)

Most complex tasks (specific advanced education or training required).

*Recommended:* DANB's CDA exam, current CPR certification, task-specific expanded functions exam.

**Editorial Note:** This and other DANB articles and commentaries may also be featured on our website, [www.tndaa.org](http://www.tndaa.org) under DANB Updates.

Join the  Today!  
[www.dentalassistant.org](http://www.dentalassistant.org)

**The ADAA's**

**Statement of Professional Commitment:**

"As a professional dental assistant, I will promote the advancement of the careers of dental assistants and the dental assisting profession in matters of education, legislation, credentialing and professional activities which enhance the delivery of quality dental health care to the public."

**TENNESSEE DENTAL ASSISTANTS' ASSOCIATION**

The Tennessee Dental Assistants' Association's objectives shall be:

- To share in the responsibility for quality dental health care delivery to all;
- To advance the practice of dental assisting toward the highest standards of performance obtainable by supporting and encouraging formal education and in providing quality continuing education;
- To support educationally-based national and/or state credentialing for the dental assisting profession; and
- To communicate effectively with all members of the health-related professions.



**Subscription Information**

For a free subscription to this quarterly newsletter, send a blank e-mail to [mega-bites@tndaa.org](mailto:mega-bites@tndaa.org) with the word "subscribe" on the subject line. We welcome your comments.

**Disclaimer:** The views reflected in this newsletter are the views of its editor and contributors and are not necessarily intended to be official statements of the Tennessee Dental Assistants' Association. However, the TDAA Board and/or the managing editor prior to publication and/or distribution must approve all content. You DO have permission to print, photocopy, FAX, e-mail, or otherwise distribute this newsletter provided it is done so in its entirety.

Michelle Ehmling, CDA, RDA  
 Managing Editor, Mega-Bites Newsletter

**General information**

**To contact the Tennessee Board of Dentistry**  
 Regarding Registration, license verifications, license renewal, CE requirements, proposed rules, to file a complaint, delegable duties, etc.

Call 615-532-3202 local or 1-800-778-4123 or visit [Http://www2.state.tn.us/health/Boards/Dentistry/index.htm](http://www2.state.tn.us/health/Boards/Dentistry/index.htm)

**To contact the Dental Assisting National Board, Inc.**  
 Regarding Certification, renewal requirements, etc.  
 Call 1-800-FOR-DANB or go to [www.danb.org](http://www.danb.org)

**To contact the Tennessee Dental Assistants' Association**  
 visit [www.tndaa.org](http://www.tndaa.org) or e-mail [info@tndaa.org](mailto:info@tndaa.org)

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DENTEDONLINE [www.dentedonline.com](http://www.dentedonline.com)

FIRST SITE STAFFING [Mcanady@firstsitestaffing.com](mailto:Mcanady@firstsitestaffing.com)

HORIZON CONSULTING GROUP, INC  
[www.dentalriskprevention.com](http://www.dentalriskprevention.com)

**Check it out! Locals Districts post meeting schedules on web**

Many local Dental Assistant Societies have posted their calendar of events on the website. Visit [www.tndaa.org](http://www.tndaa.org) and click on District News. Find your district and check out its page. For example, Second District (Knoxville) has planned an incredible year of monthly meeting and CE opportunities. Knoxville, Memphis, and Chattanooga have reported plans for CE courses in Chemical Dependency. All over Tennessee there are opportunities to learn about dental specialties, digital imaging, latex allergies, drug interactions, medical emergencies, equipment maintenance, and much, much more!

Most local organizations provide free CE to their members, and welcome non-members and other dental professionals for a small fee.

Send information about your local events to [info@tndaa.org](mailto:info@tndaa.org) for posting on our website.

### Kudos for Knoxville!

Second District Dental Assistants society gave \$240.00 to the American Red Cross for Katrina Relief effort.



The picture shows members: Mary E. Vaughn, Pres. and other members, Betty Gail Fox, Susan Nuchols, Debbie Shelton, Judith Walker and Heather Sizemore.



The members of the National Honor Society at the Tennessee Technology Center at Knoxville raised \$1500.00 for the relief effort. Judith Walker an instructor of the D.A. program at T.T.C.K. is currently head of the National Honor society and we are proud that half of the students in our class are members of the Honor society.

Congratulations to the Class of 2005! Twenty three students graduated from TTCK September 23. A new class started this week. Good luck on your RDA exams and welcome to the profession!

### A Message to Students!

from Karen Castleberry, President, TNDA

Tennessee boasts 32 dental assistant educational programs, 8 of which are ADA Accredited and 24 of which are Board Approved. This translates to at least 500 dental assistants each year training to become RDA members of Tennessee's Dental Health Care teams. Because Tennessee values education, including mandatory continuing education for all of its dental professionals, our citizens can be assured of the highest quality of dental care in the country.

You students have made an excellent career choice. We welcome you to our profession and hope to be able to mentor your professional growth through our association and its services. Visit our website at [www.tndaa.org](http://www.tndaa.org) to see what a wonderful resource it can be in helping you in your educational program and when you become a practicing RDA.

We have a special page for students and we invite you to contribute photos and other information related to your student activities. We have received permission from DANB to post the TN RDA Exam Outline on our Students' page on the TNDA website to help you prepare for your exams.

We are interested in your success. Please become an active part of your campus organization, or if you don't have a student organization, ask me how to start one! Then participate in you local and state professional activities as well. You will find it rewarding to be associated with a network of other dental assisting professional. We can help each other be better dental assistants and better professional.

It's going to be a great year! We are planning several exciting events to involve students this year, including

- An invitation to the January Board of Dentistry Meeting,
- A "Day on the Hill" to see how our legislature works,
- student contests with cash prizes for articles published in Mega-Bites,
- Dental Assistant Recognition Week activities
- A student reception at the annual Session in Chattanooga in May

For more information about the benefits of membership, visit [www.dentalassistant.org](http://www.dentalassistant.org)

Have a great school year! ☺

## TDA RDA Task Force Report

Dr. Tom Flanagan

The Tennessee Dental Association has appointed a special task force to investigate the numerous complaints from the dentists in our state regarding the process for registering dental assistants in Tennessee. The dentists feel these difficulties are leading to a serious shortage of registered dental assistants and hindering access to dental care in this state. The task force has been charged with investigating the problem and making recommendations for possible solutions.

I have been appointed to chair the task force and wanted to bring the members of the TNDAA up to speed with the progress of the committee. I have written an article which was published in the September issue of the TDA newsletter. This article addresses these issues and has been posted on the TNDAA web site. I would like to encourage anyone interested to read the article. We are currently finalizing our problem list and are beginning to discuss potential solutions. In order to be as thorough as possible, I would like to encourage TNDAA members who have had problems or complaints with the assistant registration process to voice those complaints. Most of all the task force would appreciate any solutions TNDAA members could offer to these growing problems. You can contact me via email at [tthstr8nr@aol.com](mailto:tthstr8nr@aol.com).

**Editorial Note:** Please visit [www.tndaa.org](http://www.tndaa.org) to read the full text of an article written by Dr. Flanagan and published in the September issue of the TDA Newsletter. Please share your comments with Dr. Flanagan and the TNDAA.

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## TDHA Extends Invitation to TNDAA

By Sherri Bush, RDH

TDHA would like to extend an invitation to all dental assistants to come join us at the

***TDHA Annual Session  
March 30-April 2, 2006  
Cool Springs Marriott, Franklin, TN***

It's a really great session and we have some good speakers scheduled. Please join us. For more information, visit [www.tndha.org](http://www.tndha.org)

## September Board of Dentistry Report

The Tennessee Board of Dentistry met in Nashville September 19-21. Karen Castleberry and Marcia Sivley attended the meeting Wednesday, and Janice Harper attended Wednesday afternoon and Thursday. One key item of discussion included the final approval of the Expanded Functions courses for RDA's. More detailed information will be posted at [www.tndaa.org](http://www.tndaa.org) as soon as the information is made available. A full report will be presented at the Fall Conference and posted on our website. The next meeting of the Tennessee Board of Dentistry will be January 26 and 27, likely at the new location in Metro Plaza.

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## *Congratulations!*

The Tennessee Dental Assistants' Association and two related groups were recognized in the most recent edition of "The Dental Assistant", journal of the ADAA, for their Dental Assistant Recognition Week activities.

- The TNDAA Board of Trustees were pictured at a reception for the occasion;
- DA students at Nashville's Remington College, under the instruction of Ms. Eva Hill Loring were recognized for their educational activities;
- The Orthodontic Practice of Drs. Denny Standifer and Tom Popp in Hixson, TN, were recognized for hosting a reception for the Chattanooga State Dental Assisting students.

Make plans now for DARW March 5-11<sup>th</sup>, 2006

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## Chemical Dependency Courses

Several Local Districts have announced CE courses in Chemical Dependency (for RDAs, RDHs and DDSs):

**Chattanooga** – Friday, October 28, 1:00 – 3:00 pm.

For more information, visit

<http://www.tndaa.org/CADAS.html>

**Second District (Knoxville)** – December 6, 6:30 pm at Knoxville TTC, Conference Room A. Speaker: Charlene G. Allen, LCSW, LADAC, Program Director, DACT, Ridgeview Mental Health Hospital. 1 hour CE Credit.

**Memphis** – October 13. For more information, contact Janice Harper at TTC Memphis 901-543-6166 (office)