

SMILELINE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MONTEREY BAY DENTAL SOCIETY

WINTER 2025



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

“ *The reality is this technology will enhance us. So instead of artificial intelligence, I think we’ll augment our intelligence.* ”

— Ginni Rometty

- **AI & Revamping Patient Insurance Plans—Dr. Robert Shorey**
- **Embracing AI, Virtual Care, and Cutting-Edge Innovation—Melissa Turner, BASDH, RDHEP, EFDA**
- **Revolutionizing Patient Communication—Adrian Lefler, CEO of My Social Practice**
- **Artificial Intelligence Reshaping Dental Claims—Cindy Hartwell**

SmileLine

The Newsletter
of The
Monterey Bay Dental Society

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Table Of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Editors Column..... | 3 |
| Incoming President’s Letter..... | 5 |
| George Lips—Our New MBDS Executive Director..... | 7 |
| Upcoming 2025 Continuing Education Schedule..... | 8 |
| New Members..... | 10 |
| Board of Directors..... | 11 |
| 2024 House of Delegates..... | 12 |
| 2024 Installation of Officers | 13 |
| Artificial Intelligence & Revamping Patient Insurance Plan..... | 14 |
| Embracing AI, Virtual Care, and Cutting-Edge Innovation..... | 16 |
| AI in Dentistry: Revolutionizing Patient Communication..... | 20 |
| How Artificial Intelligence (AI) is Reshaping Dental Claims..... | 24 |
| February—National Children’s Dental Health Month..... | 26 |
| Dental Assisting Apprenticeship Program..... | 27 |
| Big Sur Water Station..... | 28 |
| Obituaries | 32 |
| Cartoons | 37 |
| Parting Shot..... | 38 |

Editor’s Column Winter 2025

Dr. Carl Sackett, DDS, Editor

Happy New Year, from the Monterey Bay Dental Society! I hope 2025 has started off well for you, and you’re back into the swing of things with the holidays behind us.

The MBDS continues to experience unparalleled leadership, as this year we have **Dr. Chris Mule** guiding and steering us along—We will surely be in good hands once again. Please enjoy the Incoming President’s Letter, which highlights his thoughts and aspirations during his tenure.

Probably the biggest news for the MBDS is the announcement that our esteemed **Executive Director, Debi Diaz**, will soon be experiencing the joys of retirement. We have all enjoyed getting to know Debi over the years, and her professionalism and consistency proved invaluable to our local component. A huge THANK YOU goes out to Deb, for the attention and care she showed each and every one of us. That being said, we welcome **George Lips**, who will be filling the position, and offers his own unique talents to the society.

The theme of this issue is one that is fast-becoming a fascinating and ubiquitous aspect of modern life: **Artificial Intelligence**. Whether we like it or not, AI is transforming virtually all fields, including dentistry! You have probably already seen aspects of the technology being incorporated into your office in one way or another.

In fact, AI has already worked its way into some dental offices with the invention of Robin, an interactive Robot that helps to facilitate patient care. Much like our phones and Alexa devices, Robin can recognize faces, and even recall specifics about individuals. For children, it can provide reassurance to the nervous patient, and can aid in distraction techniques by asking customized questions (hobbies, pets, etc.). Over time, engineers have been able to further translate Robin into many other languages—yet another unique way to connect and engage.

AI can be used to help schedule appointments, update health histories, and interpret radiographs as well: This is a field where it seems like the possibilities are endless. As many of you



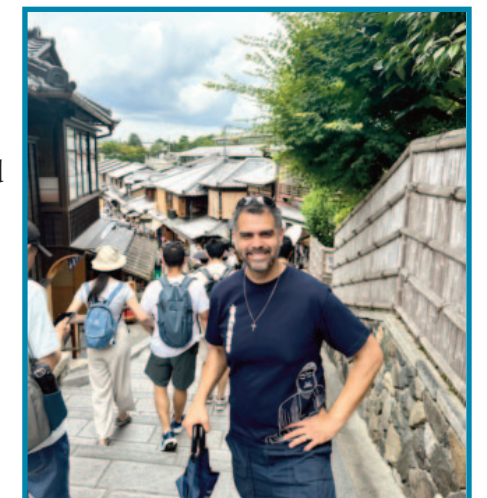
may already be thinking, “*Heck, you probably could have created this entire Newsletter using ChatGPT!*”, and I would be lying if I said that idea hadn’t already crossed my mind...

Yes, AI can have its downfalls too, and needs to be used with a judicious and discerning eye. While it can help to streamline the office experience, it is ultimately up to us humans to figure out the best ways to navigate and incorporate its use. Indeed, we even need to be

careful so as to not allow the truly advanced AI Bots to deceive and manipulate us! As with nearly all facets of life, we need to highlight and utilize the strengths, and take caution to not exploit the weaknesses.

I’d like to extend my thanks to three of our article contributors for this issue. **Adrian Lefler**, CEO of **MySocialPractice**, presented on the topic of AI at the popular Bay Area Dental Expo in the Fall. **Melissa Turner** (a.k.a., “**The Tooth Girl**”) leads AI Webinars on various platforms, and was gracious enough to contribute as well. Finally, in yet another example of inter-component collaboration, **Dr. Robert Shorey**, from our neighbors at the Santa Clara County Dental Society, gave us permission to share his article that was originally published in their own Newsletter, “*The Cutting Edge*.”

PHOTO:
Can you guess
where in the world
Dr. Sackett is?



continued next page



PHOTO: Dad and me in Yellowstone

Finally, you'll notice that the Obituary section of this issue is unusually long this time around. 2024 witnessed the loss of several seasoned dentists who practiced for several decades in the MBDS. Their spirits will be missed, and those who were fortunate enough to work alongside them will cherish their memories.

These passings are perhaps not coincidental, as yours truly also experienced an unexpected loss of a beloved family member last year.

I'd like to end this particular Editor's Letter with a short tribute to my own father, **Chuck Sackett**, who passed away after an illness in early 2025. Dad spent much of his life in Sonoma County, and enjoyed a long and fruitful career as a landscape contractor for his surrounding communities.

When I told him I wanted to pursue a career as a dentist, he was nothing but encouraging to me (even though he knew nothing about the field). He supported me through college, dental school, residency, and was so proud when he heard

I landed a job position here in the Central Coast. The picture above is one that he and I took during a trip to Yellowstone together a number of years ago. I know that Dad continues to watch over me, and will be my Guardian Angel throughout the rest of my days here on Earth—Love you, Dad!

Here's to a blessed and prosperous 2025 for us all, and I hope to see you around at one of our fun and educational MBDS events. Together, we can, and will, succeed long into the future.

Warm regards,

Charles ("Carl") Sackett, DDS
MBDS SmileLine Editor

Dr. Christopher Mule, DDS
President

It's a year of new beginnings!

I am honored and excited to lead us into the new year as your 2025 MBDS President. I am looking to continue the wonderful work of our past President Sarah Frahm. As a board, we are hopeful as we look to the upcoming year. First, I would like to thank Debi Diaz for her 14 years of hard work and dedication as our executive director. Her guidance, leadership, and attention to detail was only trumped by her contagious smile over the years. She will be missed and we wish her all the best as she starts her retirement. We love ya Debi!

In her place, we are excited to have George Lips as our new executive director of the MBDS! His years of experience working as an assistant and office manager for his dad Philip Lips, and also working for Dr. Steve Ross, have prepared him to direct us moving forward. He has a strong understanding of and compassion for our dental society community. He is ready to learn and support all of us moving forward. Welcome George, and I look forward to working closely with you.



While I am writing this, the uncontrolled Southern California wildfires are rampaging, leaving thousands of families, friends and colleagues without homes, offices, schools, and hospitals. It's a time to reach out, volunteer, and help our fellow Americans and colleagues in any way we can.

Volunteerism is hard to come by and I am appreciative of all our members who share their time and expertise, as well as donate their funds, to bettering our dental society, community, and the world. We celebrate all of

you! So please, if you or a colleague have done something extraordinary in their practices or personal lives, please reach out to myself, George, or one of our board members so we can do exactly that- celebrate you! Our society is so very special and it's important for your good works to be seen.

If you are willing to share your talents and time, we are always looking for more volunteers on the board level so please reach out.

Please look out for our upcoming continuing education schedule. We hope you find some innovative and high-quality CE courses tailored to the needs of our diverse membership. We are also providing a mix of online and in person CE opportunities for greater convenience and inclusion.

I am hoping to empower, support, and connect old and new members in the Monterey Bay region through education, advocacy, and community engagement, while advancing the oral health of our community. We are always trying to expand member engagement and support.

continued next page



PHOTO: George Lips and Debi Diaz

We will continue to:

- Serve as a trusted voice in local and state advocacy for dentistry-related legislative and regulatory matters.
- Foster relationships with policymakers to promote policies that benefit oral health and the dental profession.
- Increase member participation in ADA and CDA initiatives.
- Build public awareness of the importance of preventive dental care and its connection to overall health.
- Promote diversity within leadership roles and actively support underrepresented dental professionals.
- Ensure strong financial sustainability through strategic budgeting
- Cultivate leadership within the Society through transparent governance and clear succession planning.

The Monterey Bay Dental Society continues to be the leading resource and advocate for dental professionals in the region, fostering a vibrant community of collaboration, innovation, and service. Together, we will inspire a future where oral health is a priority for all and where our members feel valued, supported, and empowered to thrive.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you and our community! Please reach out if you are willing to help or need help. I look forward to an exciting year of growth and fulfillment.

Sincerely,



Dr. Christopher Mule



PHOTO: George Lips

After a long process of succession planning, The Monterey Bay Dental Society Board of Directors would like to officially welcome George Lips as our new Executive Director. Needless to say, George has some big shoes to fill with Debi's departure, but we are confident in his ability to take over the helm.

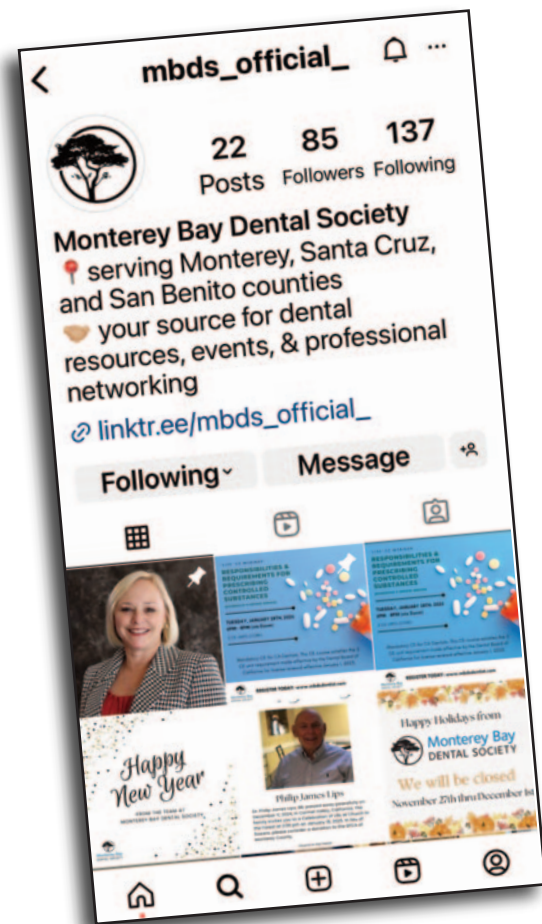
George comes to us with over 20 years in dental office management. He worked for many years at TLC Dentistry in Salinas, managing everything from HR and scheduling, to patient care. He's known for his customer service skills, strong work ethic, and attention to detail. Now, as the Executive Director of the Monterey Bay Dental Society, he's excited to support the local dental community, and bring new ideas to the role.

Outside of work, George is passionate about classic cars, gardening, good food, and travel. He lives in Del Rey Oaks, with his spouse and miniature schnauzer, enjoying time with family whenever possible.

Thanks in advance to all the benefits George will bring to his new position as the newest MBDS Executive Director. If you see him around, please give him a warm welcome, and congratulations too.

FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM!

Visit our MBDS Instagram Page @ https://www.instagram.com/mbds_official for updates, and the latest information about our local Monterey Bay Dental Society!



Party For Our Retiring Executive Officer, Debi Diaz

Enjoy these fun pictures from Debi's Special Retirement Party on Friday, January 4th, at the La Mirada, inside the Monterey Museum of Art.



Upcoming 2025 Continuing Education Schedule

Tuesday, January 16, 2025

General Membership Dinner Meeting Navigating Dental Insurance in 2025

Cindy Hartwell, CEO of Premier Dental Consulting



Live webinar
2 C.E. Units (Core)
6–8:30 p.m.
Members no charge
\$75 Non-members and Guests

Hosted by Monterey Bay Dental Society

Tuesday, January 28, 2025

Responsibilities & Requirements for Prescribing Controlled Substances

Casey Grover, MD, and Reb Close, MD



Live webinar
2 C.E. Units
(Core)* 6–8 p.m.
\$49 CDA members and staff
\$79 Non-members

**IMPORTANT: This course satisfies the 2 C.E. unit requirement (for dentists) made effective by the Dental Board of California for license renewal effective January 1, 2023.*

Hosted by Harbor Dental Society

Wednesday, February 26, 2025

California Law Update & Cyber Security Best Practices

Michael Rossiter Attorney/Partner - *Scott & Whitehead Expense*



Live webinar
2 C.E. Units (Core)
6–8 p.m.
\$49 CDA members and staff
\$79 Non-members

Hosted by Harbor Dental Society

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

Sexual Harassment Prevention Training

Michael Rossiter Attorney/Partner - *Scott & Whitehead Expense*



Live webinar
1 C.E. Units (Core)
6–8 p.m.
\$25 Employees: 4-5 p.m.
2 C.E. Unites (Core)
\$49 Employers / Managers 4-6 p.m.

Hosted by Harbor Dental Society

Wednesday, March 26, 2025

Dentist Guide to Preventing Burnout

Natanya Brown, DMD



Live webinar
2 C.E. Units (Core)
6–8 p.m.
\$49 CDA members*
\$59 Non-members*

*A\$30 price increase will be added to registrants made after 02/28/2025

Hosted by Harbor Dental Society

Thursday, March 27, 2025

Socket Preservation lecture with hands on model practice

Dr. Arian Chehrehsa



At the Monterey Bay Dental Society
2.5 C.E. Units (Core)
6-8:30 pm
\$149 CDA members and staff
\$249 Non-members

Hosted by Monterey Bay Dental Society

Thursday, April 10, 2025

OSHA and Infection Control

Nancy Dewhirst, RDH, BS



Live webinar
3 C.E. Units (Core)
6–9:15 p.m.
\$79 CDA members
\$99 Non-members

Hosted by Harbor Dental Society

Thursday, April 17, 2025

California Dental Practice Act & Ethics Training

Nancy Dewhirst, RDH, BS



Live webinar
2 C.E. Units (Core)
6–8:15 p.m.
\$49 CDA members and staff
\$79 Non-members

Hosted by Harbor Dental Society

Upcoming 2025 Continuing Education Schedule (Continued)

Friday, May 16, 2025

Mastering Dental Claims Submissions

Cindy Hartwell, CEO of Premier Dental Consulting



At the Monterey Bay Dental Society
2 C.E. Units (Core)
9-11 a.m.
\$79

Hosted by Monterey Bay Dental Society

Thursday, May 22, 2025

Introduction to full arch restorative treatment for the private practice dentist

Dr. Arian Chehrehsa



At the Monterey Bay Dental Society
2.5 C.E. Units (Core)
6-8:30 pm
\$149 CDA members and staff
\$249 Non-members

Hosted by Monterey Bay Dental Society

Thursday, June 5, 2025

BLS/CPR Certification

Yolanda Hernandez



At the Monterey Bay Dental Society
4 C.E. Units
5:30-9:30 p.m.
\$85

Thursday, June 12, 2025

Digital full arch treatment to decrease patient chair time and time to final prosthesis.

Dr. Arian Chehrehsa



At the Monterey Bay Dental Society
2.5 C.E. Units (Core)
6-8:30 pm
\$149 CDA members and staff
\$249 Non-members

Hosted by Monterey Bay Dental Society

Friday, August 22 and Saturday, August 23, 2025

Bay Area Dental Expo

Santa Clara Conference Center
Event details are coming soon.

Friday, September 4, 2025

Effective Team Leadership Strategies

Cindy Hartwell, CEO of Premier Dental Consulting



CE Meeting
2 C.E. Units (Core)
9-11 a.m.
\$79

Hosted by Monterey Bay Dental Society

Tuesday, September 16, 2025

Responsibilities & Requirements for Prescribing Controlled Substances

Casey Grover, MD, and Reb Close, MD



Live webinar
2 C.E. Units (Core)*
6–8 p.m.
\$49 CDA members and staff
\$79 Non-members

**IMPORTANT: This course satisfies the 2 C.E. unit requirement (for dentists) made effective by the Dental Board of California for license renewal effective January 1, 2023.*

Hosted by Harbor Dental Society

Installation of Officers' Dinner

Friday, October 17, 2025

Tips for Increasing Treatment Plan Acceptance

Cindy Hartwell, CEO of Premier Dental Consulting



At the Monterey Bay Dental Society
2 C.E. Units (Core)
9-11 a.m.
\$79

Hosted by Monterey Bay Dental Society

Upcoming 2025 Continuing Education Schedule (Continued)

Wednesday, November 4, 2025 OSHA and Infection Control

Nancy Dewhirst, RDH, BS



Live webinar
2 C.E. Units (Core)
6-9:15 p.m.
\$79 CDA members
\$99 Non-members

Thursday, Nov 6, 2025 California Dental Practice Act & Ethics Training

Nancy Dewhirst, RDH, BS



Live webinar
2 C.E. Units (Core)
6-8:15 p.m.
\$49 CDA members and staff
\$79 Non-members

Hosted by Harbor Dental Society

Thursday, November 13, 2025 BLS/CPR Certification

Yolanda Hernandez



At the Monterey Bay Dental Society
4 C.E. Units
5:30-9:30 p.m.
\$85



Visit mbsdentist.com
to register.

Welcome To Our New Members for 2024

| | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Carmel | Hollister | Salinas |
| Jerit Davis, DDS | Erine Mamaril, DDS | Tyler Fyfe, DDS |
| Ursula Elsinger, DDS | Monterey | Ashley Goldman, DDS |
| Rania Melhem, DDS | Jacob Lubben, DDS | Watsonville |
| | | Trupti Shinde, DDS |

We encourage old members to reach out and welcome our new members if they have not done so already. We are excited and happy to have them join us! For information about contacting our new members visit the member only section of the website for the full member directory that includes addresses and phone numbers.

DDSmatch San Francisco Bay Area & Northern CA

Powered by Northern California Practice Sales



SAN JOSE

9 Operatories!!!—Long-standing and high-quality family dental practice in San Jose near the Lawrence Expressway and Stevens Creek Boulevard is looking for the next generation practitioner in a high family-friendly environment. Annual collections have exceeded \$1.2M with an owner take home in excess of \$400,000. The staff are equally remarkable and have an average tenure of over 10 years with a four-day per-week hygiene component as well. Most endodontic, periodontic, oral surgery and orthodontic cases are typically referred to local specialists. For more information, please send an email with current CV to molinelli@aol.com or call 650-302-7467.

SCOTTS VALLEY

Located in the town of Scotts Valley, this dental practice exudes modern technology (Itero/CEREC) in a heavily trafficked location adjacent to other small businesses and stores. This practice has averaged \$800,000 in collections the past three years on six days of hygiene. As the seller refers out almost all specialty procedures and orthodontics, this practice is poised for growth.

SAN JOSE

PRICED TO SELL Long-standing family dental practice on Blossom Hill Rd. Due to Sellers health concerns, practice has pent up operative clinical work that has not been being performed these last months. Currently staffed by one hygienist - performing 2 days of hygiene a week and an office manager at this time. For more information, please send an email to roy@ddsmatch.com or call 916-918-5752

COMING SOON: 5710 Cahalan Avenue—Call for details

P.O. Box 29343 | San Francisco, CA 94129-0343 | Tel 650 - 302 - 7467 | Email: smolinelli@ddsmatch.com

Monterey Bay Dental Society 2024 - 2025 Board of Directors

Welcome to our Incoming 2025 MBDS Board of Directors

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| President | Christopher Mule, DDS |
| President-elect | Matthew Ronconi, DDS |
| Vice-President | Steven Ross, DDS |
| Secretary | Matthew Wetzel, DDS |
| Treasurer | Richard Kent, DDS |
| CDA BCR Chairman | Lindley Zerbe, DDS |
| BCR | Devin Bernhardt, DDS |
| Immediate Past President | Sarah Frahm, DDS |
| County Directors | Touraj (TJ) Khalizadeh, DMD, MD; Adriana Lalinde, DDS; Ryan Lehr, DDS; and Joshua Sanchez, DDS. |
| Publications | Carl Sackett, DDS |
| Legislative Chair | Daniel Pierre, DDS & Nannette Benedict, DDS |
| Dental Health Committee | Lloyd Nattkemper, DDS |
| Community & Public Relations | Matthew Ronconi, DDS |
| Ethics Committee | David Shin, DDS |
| New Dentist Committee | Garrett Criswell, DDS |
| Membership Committee | Steven Ross, DDS |
| Continuing Education Committee | Matthew Ronconi, DDS |

Our Outgoing 2024 MBDS Board of Directors

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| President | Sarah Frahm, DDS |
| President-elect | Christopher Mule, DDS |
| Vice-President | Lindley Zerbe, DDS |
| Secretary-Treasurer | Matthew Wetzel, DDS |
| CDA BCR Chairman | Lindley Zerbe, DDS |
| Immediate Past President | Devin Bernhardt, DDS |
| County Directors | Touraj (TJ) Khalizadeh, DMD, MD, Adriana Lalinde, DDS, Mark Reber, DDS, Matthew Ronconi, DDS and Joshua Sanchez, DDS. |
| Publications | Carl Sackett, DDS |
| Legislative Chair | Daniel Pierre, DDS & Nannette Benedict, DDS |
| Dental Health Committee | Lloyd Nattkemper, DDS |
| Community & Public Relations | Eric Brown, DDS |
| Ethics Committee | David Shin, DDS |
| New Dentist Committee | Garrett Criswell, DDS |
| Membership Committee | Lindley Zerbe, DDS |
| Continuing Education Committee | Christopher Mule, DDS |

The 2024 House of Delegates



The Board of Directors would like to say a genuine Thank You once again to our **House of Delegates Representatives** who attended the **Annual Meeting November 8th & 9th in Los Angeles**. Their advocacy on our behalf is greatly appreciated, and our component is fortunate to have such motivated professionals give of their time and energy.

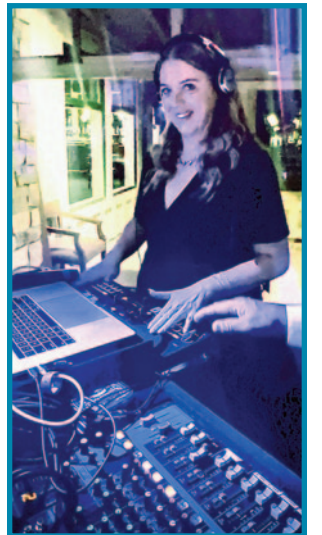
Probably the most exciting event that occurred during this year's HOD was a Resolution that was put forth, nominating our own **Debi Diaz as an Honorary CDA Member**. Congratulations to Debi, whose tireless dedication to

help our society flourish and thrive was recognized in official fashion!

Special recognition goes out to **Dr. Lindley Zerbe**, who was voted as **Chair of the CDA Board Component Representatives (BCR)**. And thank you as well to **Drs. Matthew Ronconi, Nanette Benedict, Sarah Frahm, and Chris Mule** for representing the **Monterey Bay Dental Society** at the meeting. And our **incoming Executive Director, George Lips**, was given the opportunity to participate for the first time as well! Looking forward to another productive HOD in 2025, happening in the Fall.



Installation of Officers Meeting 2024



The MBDS was excited to host yet another fun and eventful **Installation of Officers Meeting on Friday, October 25th**. Held at the **Corral De Tierra Country Club**, the evening featured recognition of the **Outgoing Board of Directors**, and an introduction of the **2025 BOD**.



A delicious **Buffet Dinner** was served, and our members enjoyed each other's company outside of the office environment. Music was provided by **"Kool, Inc. Entertainment,"** and the dancing extended well into the evening.



MBDS Dentist of the Year

Congratulations to **Dr. Matthew Ronconi**, who was awarded the **MBDS Dentist of the Year**. Dr. Ronconi is an **Orthodontist** in **Salinas**, who is a trusted practitioner and has matured into an esteemed member of our **Monterey County Community**. In addition to his efforts improving the smiles of his many patients, he has many endeavors outside of the office that showcase his care for others. He has been an avid participant in the program for **"Guide Dogs for the Blind,"** and his sweet **Golden Retrievers** can be seen joining the **BOD** at our bi-monthly meetings. Also, he has been involved in a local organization known as **Set Free Monterey Bay**:

<https://www.setfreemontereybay.org>

that helps to curb domestic violence against women, and was recently voted **"Defender of the Year."** Needless to say, he is a deserving recipient of **The Outstanding Dentist of the Year Award**

He told us he was super surprised, very humbled, and incredibly grateful.

Please join us at the next **Installation Dinner in the Fall!**

Originally published in “The Cutting Edge” Magazine - Vol. 60, No. 2 - Summer 2024

By Robert Shorey, DDS

If you’ve ever driven a Tesla, you’ve likely experienced a mix of emotions about it —both positive and negative. Ultimately, many find themselves leaning toward positivity once they’ve sorted through their feelings.

Tesla’s engineers completely reimagined what a car could be by stripping away many traditional ideas to create their unique vehicles. Noticeable differences are apparent from the established cars which used to include knobs and switches, now replaced by a single computer screen and voice commands.

Tesla has crafted a car that’s not only profitable to build but also efficient at its core function: transporting people from one place to another without the production of greenhouse gas. A standout feature of this brand is responsiveness and continuous updates to the computer system, allowing Tesla cars to always have the latest features. As a result, most owners will tell you they’re a joy to drive.

Now, let’s shift our focus to the efficiency in the delivery of dental care, a system that has become incredibly complex over time. It operates on a hierarchical multilayered structure, aiming to provide a highly sophisticated service. The service, or core function, is to provide efficient/effective care and treatment with predictable quality outcomes.

While the current systems may be established, it is clear they are not the most economically effective. Many in our dental profession believe that the prevalent dental insurance system is broken, undermining the efficiency of patient care and the profitability of dental practices.

Initially in the 1950s, dental insurance provided comprehensive care, but today it often falls short. The inefficient policies and low reimbursements dentists receive make it increasingly difficult to sustain those providing clinical care. This issue has led to a growing shortage of skilled professionals entering the field and maintaining a career, including dental assistants, dental hygienists, and dentists themselves.

It’s at this point that we might draw parallels with Tesla’s approach. Just as Tesla engineers reimagined the concept of cars, it may be



Robert Shorey, DDS

Robert Shorey, DDS, is a cosmetic dentist at Shorey Dentistry in Morgan Hill, California. Dr. Shorey practiced in the Sacramento/Placer County area for 25 years before moving to Morgan Hill to take over the practice of Dr. Robert Moulthrop, his long-time friend and dental school roommate.

The MBDS thanks Dr. Shorey for sharing this article he penned for “The Cutting Edge” (Newsletter from the Santa Clara County Dental Society).

time for us to rethink how dental care is delivered relative to the systems we have in place. Can we find more efficient methods of patient care delivery while maintaining high standards? Could advancements in AI aid in definitive diagnosis and prevention methods, ultimately reducing overhead costs and settling issues with insurance interference in patient care?

Some suggest that Dental Service Organizations (DSOs) might hold the answer. DSOs do aim to make the administrative part of dental care delivery more efficient. However, while DSOs

pool resources and offer management support, they often prioritize profits over patient care. Additionally, they may encourage young dentists to focus on productivity without fully understanding the long-term implications of their treatment decisions.

In a dental office, functions can be divided into diagnostic, preventive, and treatment categories, along with administrative tasks. The administrative side, particularly dealing with insurance companies, is a burdensome and costly layer in the established hierarchical structure of dentistry.

Streamlining these processes, perhaps with the help of AI, can significantly reduce overhead expenses when we consider 20 to 30 percent of overhead is often tied up in dealing with insurance/billing administration.

AI-assisted diagnosis could improve consistency in treatment and provide a definitive less-challenged foundation for diagnosis. It can help patients better understand their dental needs and set aside suspected motivations behind the suggestions made for their dental diagnosis and care.

The current state of dental insurance in 2024 is best suited for preventive care only and less able to address the comprehensive restorative needs of many adult patients. It’s time to recognize the shortfalls of dental insurance so patients clearly understand the nature of what we are calling dental insurance.

Today’s insurance is misleading to patients and is in need of an overhaul. Dental benefits should be reorganized to address policies designed for prevention and new dental products developed that recognize the comprehensive needs of patients separately. The core structure of 2024 dental insurance has not changed since the 1950s and no longer meets the comprehensive needs of patients.

Expanding on the Tesla comparison can shed further light on the potential avenues for improvement. Tesla’s success lies not only in its groundbreaking technology but also in its commitment to continuous innovation. The company regularly updates its vehicles’ software, adding new features and improving existing ones. Similarly, the dental profession could benefit from a culture of ongoing innovation embracing AI to assist in diagnosis and treatment planning.

Insurance could help in this effort by streamlining the cost of administration. Reduced administrative costs could allow dental offices to invest more resources in technology and innovations. Tesla embraced technology and innovation by design. Their vehicles are equipped with advanced sensors and cameras that enable features like autopilot and self-parking. In dentistry, digital innovations such as AI diagnosis, flow charted treatment analysis, intraoral scanners, 3D printing and milling, and teledentistry have already begun to revolutionize patient care efficiency.

Embracing these technologies can streamline processes, improve accuracy, and enhance patient outcomes. Dental insurance needs to understand its role in our dental profession if the profession is going to survive the ongoing economic pressures.

If insurance does not recognize its role, Tesla’s direct-to-consumer sales model may be another example of changing the marketplace. Direct-to-consumer sales challenges the traditional dealership model, providing customers with a more streamlined and transparent purchasing experience. Similarly, dentistry could benefit from exploring alternative insurance and practice models prioritizing high-quality patient-centric efficiency and care. Direct primary care (DPC) models, for example, offer patients comprehensive access to primary care services for a flat monthly fee, bypassing the burdens and complexities of insurance billing.

Just as Tesla revolutionized the automotive industry, it’s time for dentistry to undergo a similar paradigm shift. By embracing digital technology, holding dental insurance accountable where they fall short, exploring alternative practice models, and prioritizing patient-centric care, dental practices can adapt to meet the evolving needs of patients and ensure long-term success in a rapidly changing healthcare landscape.

Embracing new diagnostic technologies and reimagining our approach to patient care delivery, we can ensure a brighter future for both dental professionals and patients alike.



Melissa K. Turner

With two decades of experience as a dental hygienist and as a visionary founder, Melissa K. Turner is a sought-after leading executive, consultant, captivating speaker, and one of the top millennial content creators. A driving force behind some of the most cutting-edge brands in the dental industry, she collaborates with organizations ranging from budding startups to billion-dollar giants, enhancing brand strategy and fueling product growth.

Turner’s extensive experience, spanning from decision-making in the boardroom to hands-on

Melissa Turner, BASDH, RDHEP, EFDA

Revolutionizing Dental Care in the United States: Embracing Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Care, and Cutting-Edge Innovation

In 2019, the American Mobile & Teledentistry Alliance introduced the concept of “*Alternative Care Delivery Models*” to spearhead an industry-wide shift towards more innovative dental practices. These models encompass virtual care, telehealth, and mobile/portable services. The same year witnessed the debut of the National Mobile & Teledentistry Conference, which aimed to educate the community on offering dental services beyond the traditional brick-and-mortar setup. As a co-founder and executive board member of these initiatives, and a leading educator in technology and the future of dentistry, I have the privilege of highlighting the movement towards utilizing technology to improve access to dental care both in the United States and globally.

Transitioning from Traditional to Mobile Practices

Historically, dental practices in the United States have functioned as standalone entities housed in physical locations, distinct from other healthcare providers. However, a progressive group of public health professionals has been at the forefront of delivering portable or mobile dental care to underserved areas. Simultaneously, mobile-only dental organizations have rapidly emerged, focusing on providing preventive and comprehensive care to employees within corporate and workplace settings. This trend underscores the critical role of mobile and portable dentistry in reaching all communities, regardless of socioeconomic status, location, or wealth.

Teledentistry and Technological Advances

In 2018, the American Dental Association approved the initial teledentistry CDT Procedure Codes, enabling virtual telehealth appointments and supervision in dentistry. This approval has allowed mobile clinicians to stay connected and enhance their mobility. Concurrently, the rise of clear aligner companies has championed telehealth in dentistry, facilitating virtual engagement between patients and orthodontists. Moreover, advancements in artificial intelligence, machine learning, and technology have

introduced innovations such as m-Health, remote patient monitoring, point-of-care oral testing, and smart oral care devices. These developments have improved communication in patient-provider and provider-provider relationships. Additionally, patient-facing teledentistry websites and apps have proven effective in reducing dental emergency hospital visits and connecting patients with local dental care providers.

Addressing Current Challenges and Shifting Expectations

The ongoing staffing shortages and related challenges have prompted private and corporate dental organizations to focus on same-store growth, increasing business efficiency, optimizing human resources, and reevaluating clinical care models. Meanwhile, patient and consumer expectations have evolved, placing a premium on transparency, convenience, and flexibility in all healthcare interactions. Artificial intelligence programs and technology stacks now empower dental organizations to accelerate same-store growth, propelling dental care delivery into new dimensions.

Future of Dental Care Delivery

While traditional dental facilities will remain primary service venues, the future will increasingly emphasize the hub-and-spoke business and clinical model. Dental organizations may operate several physical locations while also establishing virtual divisions accessible via patients’ mobile devices, as well as mobile/portable branches reaching workplaces, community centers, homes, and schools.

Furthermore, dental providers will leverage communication platforms enabled by artificial intelligence, smart mirrors, smart glasses, and other next-generation devices to facilitate seamless interaction with other dental providers, specialists, and medical professionals.

The widespread adoption of Alternative Care Delivery Models will boost efficiency, broaden access to care, and create new revenue streams for many dental organizations. Patients and consumers will benefit significantly, as they can more easily connect with new and existing dental providers, ultimately enhancing patient retention, case acceptance, and follow-up care.

Advancements in Oral Health

Oral diseases are becoming increasingly prevalent, surpassing many other chronic systemic conditions. With continuous advancements in artificial intelligence, generative AI, machine

clinical work and her influential public persona, equips her with unparalleled foresight into upcoming industry trends.

As the founder and a key board member of several companies, she is often celebrated as a “*fresh force of change.*” Honored with the 2024 Marquis Who’s Who in America, Turner embodies a new wave in dentistry, championing advancements through innovative technology, inclusivity, and the well-being of practitioners.

As the Senior Executive Consultant and Chief Hygiene Officer at Cellerant Consulting Group, Turner spearheads the Cellerant Best of Class Hygiene Awards. She is a founding board member of the American Mobile & Teledentistry Alliance and serves on the executive board of the Dental AI Association. Known in the digital sphere as @thetoothgirl, she is also the co-founder of The Denobi Awards, the National Mobile & Teledentistry Conference, and the I Heart Dentistry Network.

Turner’s proudest launches include Smile Proud, an advocacy organization built to support current and future LGBTQIA+ dental professionals, as well as, “*I, Woman,*” a podcast for women founders, executives and entrepreneurs focusing on what it takes to unleash their inner roar in the boardroom, the bedroom and beyond.

Turner can be reached at: www.MelissaKTurner.com.

Embracing AI, Virtual Care, and Cutting-Edge Innovation (Continued)

learning, augmented reality, and other cutting-edge technologies, it is expected that dental care in the United States will continue to progress towards next-generation virtual and mobile modalities, resulting in substantial improvements in oral and systemic health across all communities.

To go deeper into this technology, join us in Portland, Oregon at the upcoming National Mobile & Teledentistry Conference on February 27 - March 1, 2025.

Learn more at www.nmdconference.com

AI and Virtual Care Resources

National Mobile & Teledentistry Conference
<https://nmdconference.com/>

American Mobile & Teledentistry Alliance
<https://www.amda.net/sys/website>

American Telemedicine Association <https://www.american-telemed.org/>

Mobile Healthcare Association <https://mobilehca.org/>



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Adrian Lefler, CEO and Cofounder of My Social Practice

Adrian Lefler, CEO of My Social Practice, is a seasoned expert in the dental marketing industry with 14 years of experience. He is widely recognized for his engaging and informative presentations.

Based in Suncrest, Utah, Adrian shares his life with his wife, four children, and a lively mix of pets.

My Social Practice is a leading dental marketing company, and Adrian is passionate about helping dental professionals succeed in this dynamic field.

Adrian Lefler, CEO and Cofounder of My Social Practice

The dental industry is on the cusp of a technological revolution, with artificial intelligence (AI) at the forefront. In 2025, AI is becoming an indispensable tool for dental practices, offering solutions that were once the domain of science fiction.

This article explores how AI is transforming dentistry, from enhancing patient care to streamlining practice operations.

I. Overview of AI in Dentistry

AI's impact on dentistry is profound, reshaping how dental professionals approach patient care and manage their practices. Modern AI applications span a wide range of functions, from content creation and marketing to managing patient conversations, assisting in diagnosis and providing second opinions in x-ray technology, and even handling insurance verification. The landscape of AI in dentistry is rapidly evolving, with new tools and products emerging weekly to help dentists run their practices more efficiently.

II. Conversational AI: The Next Frontier in Dental Practice Management

While much attention has been given to AI's role in clinical diagnosis, particularly in radiology with companies like Pearl, there's a significant aspect of AI that deserves equal attention: *Conversational AI*.

The American Dental Association's 2022 article on AI in dentistry primarily focused on clinical applications, overlooking the transformative potential of conversational AI in practice management and patient interaction. *Conversational AI* refers to the capability of AI systems to engage in sophisticated, human-like conversations. In recent months, the power of *Conversational AI* in the dental industry has grown exponentially. This technology can now be seamlessly integrated into patient management systems through API connections, allowing AI tools to schedule appointments directly without human intervention. Large language models like ChatGPT form the backbone of these systems, enabling natural, context-aware interactions with patients.

In this article, we will explore how *Conversational AI* for dentists can be leveraged to improve practice management and

boost new patient acquisition, filling a crucial gap in current industry discussions.

III. What is *Conversational AI* for a Dental Practice?

Conversational AI is a sophisticated technology that allows machines to understand and respond to human language in a natural, authentic way. To understand how it works, consider how our brains process language. When someone says "peanut butter and..." your mind likely automatically completes the phrase with "jelly." This predictive behavior is similar to how AI models work.

AI language models are trained on vast amounts of text data, learning patterns and relationships between words and concepts. This training allows them to predict the most likely next word or phrase in a sequence, much like our brains do. But these models go beyond simple prediction – they can understand context, nuance, and even sentiment.

What makes conversational AI particularly powerful for dental practices is the ability to fine-tune these models with specific information. Imagine having a ChatGPT-like model that's been trained on all your practice's information – from your history and team bios to your services, pricing, and even the unique tone of your office. This AI would essentially be a virtual team member with perfect recall of all practice information.

So, the question becomes: If you had an AI agent that could carry on human-like conversations, was trained on everything about your practice (including how to overcome objections about insurance or costs), and could communicate with the empathy and tone that matches your office culture, how would you use it in your dental practice? How could you leverage this technology to improve practice profitability by streamlining processes and freeing up your human team for more complex tasks?

Two simple yet powerful ways a dental practice can dramatically improve profitability by implementing conversational AI are:

- 1. **Providing 24/7 phone assistance**
- 2. **Adding an advanced AI web chat to their website**

In both scenarios, an AI agent can manage conversations without the need for human intervention, significantly expanding your practice's availability and responsiveness.

IV. Benefits of AI Phone Assistance: Providing 24/7 Coverage

Voicemail, the typical solution for after-hours calls or during busy periods, is an outdated technology when considering the capabilities of AI. Consider these statistics:

- Approximately 32% of all inbound calls to dental practices are missed because they occur after hours, on weekends, or when the front office is too busy to answer.
- Nearly two-thirds of callers sent to voicemail do not leave a message.
- 87% of people who call a dental practice and don't get immediate support don't call back – they call another practice instead.

Dental consultants and industry leaders estimate that practices are conservatively missing \$100,000 to \$150,000 a year in opportunities simply because phones aren't being answered.

Conversational AI tools can be integrated directly into a dental practice's phone system. Instead of sending patients to voicemail, an AI agent can answer calls, respond to questions, overcome objections, and even schedule appointments. The AI can then notify the practice of newly scheduled appointments.

One tool leading the charge in this area is Annie. Dental practices can get on the waiting list to add Annie to their phone systems by clicking here.

V. Artificial Intelligence Web Chat

Webchat, introduced decades ago, was meant to provide immediate, on-demand support to patients. However, it hasn't been widely adopted in the dental industry due to the challenges of managing the influx of chats. Despite this, consumers and patients prefer web chat over phone calls and even email communication.

The problem has been that managing web chats requires immediate responses, which is intrusive to dental team members who are already juggling multiple tasks. Hiring a dedicated employee or outsourcing web chat management has been the only solution, but it's not cost-effective for most practices and there is a lack of quality control.

However, there's significant value in adding AI webchat to a dental practice website. By 2025, 48% of the population will be

millennials and Gen Z – demographics that value their time, dislike phone calls, and expect immediate responses through chat. Dental practices that offer web chat simply get more new patients scheduled. It improves website visitor conversion rates and provides a communication platform for current patients to get quick answers, reducing phone call volume for the front office.

Now, with *Conversational AI* trained specifically on a practice's information, an AI agent can manage 80-90% of chats without support from the dental team. This technology makes webchat a valuable, non-intrusive tool for dental practices.

VI. How AI Can Help Your Dental Practice: Notable Benefits

- 1. Enhanced Patient Experience:** AI-powered phone assistants and webchat offer 24/7 personalized service, swiftly addressing inquiries and resolving issues. This leads to heightened patient satisfaction and lasting loyalty.
- 2. Increased Efficiency and Productivity:** Routine tasks are automated, allowing team members to focus on patient care and practice growth. AI-powered automation can propel productivity skyward, with significant gains in operational efficiency.
- 3. Cost and Time Savings:** AI slashes costs for practices by automating tasks and boosting efficiency. It trims labor expenses and reduces errors, allowing for strategic resource allocation and freeing up funds for growth and innovation.
- 4. Improved Marketing Efforts:** AI provides 24/7 coverage and leads to increased conversations, new patient acquisitions, which improves the overall effectiveness of marketing efforts.
- 5. Enhanced Competitive Edge:** Adopting AI allows dental practices to stay competitive in a rapidly evolving market, offering innovative solutions that differentiate them from competitors.
- 6. Scalability:** As your practice grows, AI adapts seamlessly, managing surging data, patient engagement, and operational needs without requiring proportional increases in resources.

VII. Simple Strategies for Adopting AI in Dental Practices

When it comes to dentistry and AI, the key is to start small and scale gradually. Begin with specific tasks that can immediately improve your practice's efficiency and patient experience.

First, consider adding an AI web chat to your website to provide instant support to visitors and potential patients.

Second, implement an AI phone assistant to capture missed calls and ensure 24/7 availability.

Third, explore products like Pearl that use AI to analyze x-rays and support clinical diagnosis.

As AI continues to develop and more tools become refined, you can integrate additional AI capabilities into your workflow. Starting with these non-intrusive AI applications can immediately boost profitability by reducing costs through task delegation to AI agents and improving top-line revenue through enhanced case acceptance and increased new patient scheduling.

VIII. Future Trends of AI for Dental Practices

AI software tools are being developed that are making practice management more scalable and streamlined, reducing costs, and improving the profitability of dental practices. Tools like Annie are rapidly evolving, developing new capabilities as we speak.

For example, outbound dialing is a feature that AI agents like Annie are incorporating, which would allow for automated appointment reminders, rescheduling, and even taking payments over the phone. These AI agents could also handle new patient intake forms via phone prior to the patient coming for their appointment.

Additionally, functionality like call connect is on the horizon, allowing AI agents to seamlessly transfer web chat conversations to phone calls with the practice when necessary.

All of these advancements free up time for front office staff to focus on building relationships with patients in the office and providing the personalized attention that's crucial for patient satisfaction and retention.

Conclusion

AI is poised to transform every aspect of dental practice, from patient care to operational efficiency. Dental practices who lean into AI technology will outperform those that do not. By embracing these innovative solutions, forward-thinking dentists can enhance patient outcomes, streamline operations, and position their practices for long-term success in an increasingly competitive and technologically advanced field.

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How Artificial Intelligence (AI) is Reshaping Dental Claims



Cindy Harwell
Owner, Premier Dental Consulting

Technology is rapidly changing dentistry—not just in the way we provide care, but also in how dental benefit plans process claims. Auto adjudication is a form of AI-driven claims processing that can speed up payments, it can also create confusion for dental offices when unexpected denials or approvals occur.

Many dental plans now use auto-adjudication to handle a significant volume of claims. This process relies on a computer system programmed to approve or deny claims based on plan policies and patient benefits—without human intervention. While these advancements can speed up claim processing, they can also lead to confusion, especially if a practice is unaware that this type of technology is being used during claim processing.

Adapting to these changes means understanding how these systems work and adjusting your workflows. Many frustrations with AI-driven claims come from not realizing that automation is involved and not knowing how to navigate the process effectively.

Let's explore three common ways AI can impact your claims:

1. Denial of a Covered Service

A dental plan might approve a crown but deny the buildup when both services are billed together. Since there's no manual review, the system follows strict processing policies. These rules are usually outlined in the provider guide/handbook, but

without reviewing them, a denial can be puzzling. Many assume a dental consultant reviewed the claim when, in reality, it was simply an automated decision.

2. Payment for Non-Covered Service

Imagine you submit a claim for a veneer placed for cosmetic reasons, something the patient's policy doesn't cover. If the claim lacks clear documentation in the remarks section about the cosmetic nature, AI might process the payment anyway. While this seems beneficial in the short term, it can cause issues later. If the treating dentist is in-network and the plan audits the claim, or practice, post payment, they may request a refund. If the office has already reimbursed the patient, recovering those funds can be difficult.

3. Denial of a Predetermined Treatment

Many plans offer online portals for submitting treatment predeterminations, helping practices check eligibility, copayments, deductibles, and maximums. However, these systems often provide policy details without actual clinical review. This means that even if a service appears covered, it could still be denied later if it doesn't meet the dental plan/policies clinical criteria. Without recognizing this distinction, both the dental team and the patient may be caught off guard by a denial.

Staying Ahead of AI in Claims Processing

Understanding how dental benefit plans use AI is essential to reducing frustrations, payment delays, and claim denials. By familiarizing yourself with plan policies, thoroughly verifying benefits, and adapting to digital advancements, your practice can stay ahead.

If your office is dealing with claim denials, reimbursement issues, or the complexities of claims processing, I can help. With extensive experience in dental benefits and claims management, I offer expert guidance in PPO negotiations, dental billing, insurance audits, team training, and overall practice efficiency. My services are designed to help you, and your team maximize revenue while minimizing disruptions. Let's work together to streamline your operations—reach out today!

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"From the beginning to the end, everything went flawlessly with Integrity Practice Sales! Working with Darren Hulstine and his team has been a tremendous pleasure. They were professional, helpful, patient, honest, and meticulous. We couldn't be more thankful!" - Dr. Lin

Experience you can trust:

In 2011 Darren co-founded Integrity Practice Sales and turned his attention towards helping dentists with successful transitions. He has now been in the dental industry for 29 years and, as a long-time resident of the Central Coast, he has a well-established dental network. He also holds a wealth of knowledge in regard to local practice sales trends and successful practice transitions.



Office: (855) 337 - 4337

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Promoting Children’s Dental Health Month

Every February, the ADA observes National Children’s Dental Health Month bringing together thousands of dedicated professionals, healthcare providers, and educators to promote the benefits of good oral health for children. This month is celebrated with social media campaigns, free care events, and patient education for families.

In Santa Cruz County, Oral Health Access celebrates the month and the work over the past eight years to improve children’s dental health. This work has achieved great results, including a 25% reduction in cavities among kinder-aged children and a 58% increase in children ages 0-2 going to the dentist, highlighted in the 2022 Oral Health Needs Assessment for the Central Coast.

How you can promote Children’s Dental Health Month in your practice:

- Host a “free day of care” for children during the month of February.
- Schedule First Tooth, First Birthday (1T1B) dental visits, supported by the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD).
- Complete a Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment (KOHA) form for all TK / Kinder patients and instruct parents to submit the completed form to their child’s school. Share KOHA flyer with parents/caregivers.
- For more information and resources, visit Smile Ca website for Providers or to contact the Oral Health Access, Santa Cruz County, please email:

info@oralhealthsc.org

Become an Employer Partner in the SCCOE Dental Assisting Apprenticeship Program!

For over two decades, the Santa Cruz County Office of Education (SCCOE) has provided high-quality career training in dental assisting. This year, SCCOE has introduced an innovative Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) for Dental Assisting in the Monterey Bay Tri-County region. The launch of the Dental Assisting Apprenticeship Program (DAAP), with support from Dientes Community Dental Care, marks a milestone in career-technical education in our community. The apprenticeship model eliminates barriers between education, hands-on training, and employment, offering structured, paid on-the-job training and tuition-free classroom instruction to future dental assistants.

Why Apprenticeship?

The Dental Assisting Apprenticeship Program (DAAP) addresses the increasing demand for skilled dental assistants, with over 600 annual job openings in Santa Cruz and surrounding counties. Our apprenticeship model provides a direct pathway from training to full-time employment, ensuring a steady pipeline of qualified professionals ready to serve the community.

How It Works:

The apprenticeship kicks off in August with a 5-week intensive training, where apprentices earn key industry certifications, including Infection Control, the Dental Practice Act, and BLS-CPR. They then transition to paid, on-the-job training, working 32 hours per week in dental offices while being mentored by experienced professionals. Apprentices also continue to attend weekly classes to earn the CA Dental Radiation Safety certification and further develop their knowledge and skills. Starting at \$18.45 per hour, wages progressively increase based on training milestones, reaching at least \$22 per hour upon program completion in May. Employers must adhere to this minimum wage schedule.



Why Partner With Us?

We are actively seeking dental offices in Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito Counties to hire and train apprentices for the upcoming 2025-2026 program year. As an employer partner, you will:

- Gain access to a motivated and diverse talent pool of future dental assistants
- Reduce recruitment and hiring costs
- Improve retention and job success rates
- Benefit from wraparound services and accommodations for both employers and apprentices
- Receive a \$7,500 SCCOE DAAP Mentorship stipend for training apprentices

Invest in the future of your practice and the next generation of dental professionals! If you’re a dentist in the tri-county area and are interested in hiring and training an apprentice, we would love to connect with you.

For more information on becoming an employer partner, contact us at CALS@santacruzcoe.org or visit us at:

<https://dental.santacruzcoe.org/>

Big Sur Water Station



Enjoy these photos from the MBDS Water Station, held annually during the Big Sur Marathon. Thanks to our participants, and as always, Dr. Lindley Zerbe, who spearheads the endeavor.

If you are interested in volunteering for the event in the future, keep your eyes peeled for a sign-up email that is distributed to the MBDS members. After the race, food and camaraderie are usually shared at the Big Sur River Inn, and all proceeds raised benefit the Cabrillo Dental Hygiene Program.



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Obituaries



Dr. Carl Victor Noto , DDS

Dr. Carl Victor Noto joined the angels on May 1, 2024, surrounded by his family and held in their love.

Carl was born on August 14, 1948, in Chandler, Arizona to Joseph and Pauline Noto. He was the second of four children and was their eldest son. When he was 4 years old, the family moved to the Monterey Peninsula where he lived most of his life. Carl attended Junipero Serra School at Carmel Mission, Carmel High School, and Monterey Peninsula College, before attending the University of California, Davis and subsequently earning his Doctor of Dental Surgery at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska in 1974.

After receiving the “D.D.S.” after his name, Carl returned to the Monterey Peninsula and joined his father’s dental practice until his Dad retired and his brother Tom joined the practice.

Carl served our community as a dentist for nearly 50 years. As many of his patients can attest, Carl was a comedian and a storyteller, often making patients laugh around the dental instruments in their mouths. Carl was an avid outdoorsman, a musician, and a giver of many gifts — floss, toothbrushes, his favorite pocket knives and woven shemaghs (scarves).

Carl was predeceased by his parents; his sister, Felicia Colton; and his mother-in-law, Bruna Odello. Carl leaves behind his wife of 47 years, Pamela Noto; his siblings, Joanne Noto and Tom Noto; his sister-in-law, Carla Odello; his nieces, Courtney (Carlos) Colimodio, Ariana and Rachel Wylie and Nicole Colton; grandnephews, Zane Fuqua and David Colimodio, and his many patients who were like family.



Dr. Gerald Tadao Kondo , DDS

Doctor Gerald Tadao Kondo, “Gerry” to most, passed away peacefully in his sleep on July 5, 2024 with his wife Vicki at his bedside.

Gerald was born on December 30, 1950 to George Takashi Kondo and Ayako Alice (Tagami) Kondo in Fowler, California. He attended Fresno State University and went on to receive his Doctorate of Dental Surgery degree from the prestigious Northwestern University Dental School in Chicago. After dental school, Gerry settled in Aptos, California to raise two precious daughters - Leah Von Pervieux and Brooke Kondo Rains, DDS. He built a thriving dental practice in Watsonville where his patients and staff became his family for over 40 years.

He was active in the community through his many years of leadership in the Watsonville Buddhist Temple, Japanese American Citizens

League, Rotary International, and the Community Health Trust of Pajaro Valley. In 1990, he co-founded Kokoro no Gakko, a Japanese cultural youth program in Watsonville, which is still thriving. He was personally dedicated to provide access to health care to all patients who required it; organizing local dentists and organizations to provide pro-bono dental work through the Dental Affinity Program, sending medical supplies for the Rotary Peru project,

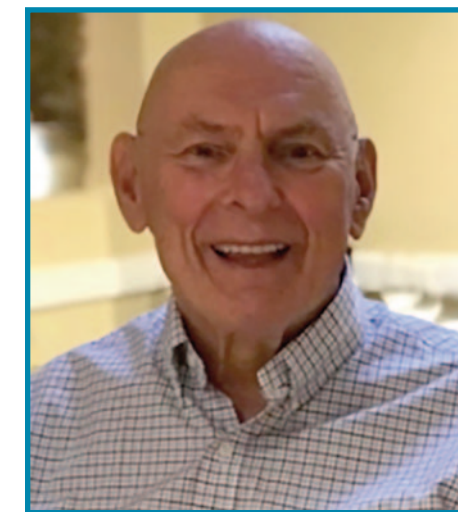
Obituaries

and volunteering as a supervising doctor for a dental student mission trip to Moala Fiji are just a few examples of his resolve for improving the quality of life for others.

After many years of fully committing his life to raising his daughters, serving his community, working tirelessly at his dental practice, and being a caregiver for his mother, he was blessed to marry Vicki Belkin-Kondo. With his marriage, he lovingly expanded his family with Tamara, Aron, Adar and Saadiah.

Gerry and Vicki enjoyed traveling together, hosting elaborate parties, organizing Giants tailgates, and attending events with Temple Beth El and their Havurah. He was an avid Bay Area sports fan and held season tickets for many years for the Giants, Warriors, and 49ers. His favorite pastime was fly fishing and he would even tie his own flies for his many fishing trips with friends, family or notable with “The Boys.” Gerry was always humble about his many accomplishments, but he was always proud to share stories about his children and grandchildren’s latest achievements. His kindness and passion for living life to its fullest will be remembered and unequalled.

He is preceded in death by his loving parents—George, Alice, and Bill, as well as his brother Robert Kondo. He is survived by his wife Vicki Belkin Kondo, children Leah (Tony) Von Pervieux, Brooke (Chris) Rains, Tamara Belkin, Aron Halil, Adar (Laura) Halil and Saadi (Gabriela) Halil, his 9 grandchildren (Takeo, Makenna, Edward, Lily, Layla, Zosia, Maverick, Aria and Zion), aunt Kikue Horikawa, sister-in-law Ann Kondo, many cousins, nieces and nephews, and lifelong friends.



Dr. Philip James Lips , DDS

We celebrate the life of Philip James Lips, beloved husband, father, grandfather, and friend, who passed away peacefully at the age of 88.

Born in Fresno, California, Philip was the youngest of four children. He carried a lifelong love for trains and cherished adventures with his siblings and best friend, John. After high school, he attended Saint Mary’s College and earned a dental degree from USC, where he met Karen, his wife of over 50 years. Together, they raised four children—George, Maria, Paul, and Peter—and built a home filled with love, faith, and laughter.

Philip served as a volunteer firefighter, sang in his church choir, and was a dedicated lector. His faith and generosity touched everyone he met. A passionate traveler, he often recounted

cherished trips with Karen, including their backcountry honeymoon in Mammoth Lakes and visits to Hawaii and Switzerland.

A devoted grandfather, Philip adored his grandchildren—Nick, Chris, Julian, and Tatum—bringing joy and laughter to their lives. Known for his infectious humor, he had a knack for making others smile, from family gatherings to his dental practice.

Philip is survived by his children, grandchildren, and many nieces, nephews, and friends. He was predeceased by his wife, Karen, his parents, and siblings.

Rest in peace, Philip.

Obituaries



Dr. Donald Rogers

Dr. Donald Rogers, a beloved orthodontist and cherished community member of Salinas, passed away peacefully on September 30, 2024, at the age of 88. Born on June 16, 1936, in Toronto, Kansas, to Roland and Hilma (Petty) Rogers, Don's journey began in a small town, but his aspirations took him far and wide with the academic education his parents valued and encouraged.

A proud alumnus of the University of Kansas, Don carried his Jayhawks spirit throughout his life. His service in the Navy stationed in San Diego as a dentist marked the beginning of his medical career, which he continued with his orthodontics studies at the University of Missouri, Kansas City. Having fallen in love with California, he settled in Salinas, where he became an integral part of the community for over 60 years.

Named "Dentist of the Year" by the Monterey Bay Dental Society, he was also published in orthodontic journals. Known affectionately as "Dr. Don," he transformed countless smiles and positively impacted the lives of many. It's often said that one cannot walk through Salinas without encountering someone whose teeth were straightened by him.

Don was a devoted husband to Diane, with whom he shared 25 years of love and partnership. He is survived by his sons Michael Rogers of San Francisco and Mark (Gabriela) Rogers of Sofia, Bulgaria, and grandsons Arthur Rogers and Edward Rogers, with his former wife Linda Sweeney. He is also survived by his son Glenn Rogers of Sacramento, and grandchildren Gabe Rogers and Sara Rogers. Additionally, he leaves behind stepchildren Tom (Shonna) Frudden, Sara (Aurelio) Reyes, and Rob Frudden, all of Fresno; along with step-grandchildren Andrew Frudden, Natalie Reyes, Alyssa Reyes, and Sam Frudden. Don is also survived by his brother Rodney (Shirley) Rogers of Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Don was a vibrant part of the Salinas community, actively participating in the Rotary Club, California Rodeo, and enjoyed membership at the Corral de Tierra Country Club.

An avid golfer, he spent countless hours on the golf course, where his competitive spirit shone brightly. Whether he won or lost, he always celebrated, embodying his love for camaraderie.

Don was also an adventurous soul who created memories for his family and friends. His love of the outdoors and excitement for adventure began as a young Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts of America, in which he actively participated with his sons in the local Salinas troop. As an adult, he earned his private pilot's license and found joy in traveling the world to ski the breathtaking slopes of the Alps and Canadian Rockies, as well as play rounds of golf on the picturesque shores of Scotland and Ireland.

His infectious spirit and unwavering optimism inspired all who knew him. Don leaves behind a legacy of kindness, dedication, and a profound commitment to making the world a brighter place, one smile at a time - both figuratively and literally. He will be deeply missed by his family, friends, and the countless lives he touched throughout his life.



Obituaries



Dr. John Victor Anderson, DDS

John Victor Anderson, a longtime resident of Watsonville, passed away on June 14, 2024. He was 91.

John was born on November 15, 1932 in Wisconsin. He attended Plymouth High School in Wisconsin and went on to UC Davis and got a Major in Zoology then went to Dental School in San Francisco at the University of the Pacific in 1961. He enrolled in the Army and proudly served his country. He lived in various places; Minneapolis, MN, Plymouth, WI, Carmel Valley, Aptos, and eventually settled in Watsonville, where he met and married the love of his life, Julie and together they would share 32 wonderful years until her passing.

John opened a dental practice in Watsonville on Green Valley Road. Dr. Anderson saw patients at his practice for over 50 years. John

would say that he loved the culture and the community of Watsonville. Stories of him accepting livestock (chickens), and home goods, etc., in lieu of payment were many. His patients were very loyal and went to him for compassionate and loving care. During his lifetime he was an amateur photographer and traveled the world on many cruises.

John is survived by and will be greatly missed by his nephew Dirk Stuart Whitaker and Erica plus her family (a friend who turned into family) He was preceded in death by his beloved wife Julie Ann Champney-Anderson, his parents Victor and Amelia Anderson, and his siblings, Mary Elizabeth, James, and Rob.



NORTHERN CALIFORNIA PRACTICE SALES

Dental Practice Sales and Appraisals

Santa Cruz

Associate before buying into this large family practice in the heart of Santa Cruz. The owner wishes to work alongside an associate for three to six months on a two- to three-day per-week schedule before trading places with the buyer following a buyout.

Scotts Valley

Located in the town of Scotts Valley, this dental practice exudes modern technology (Itero/CEREC) in a heavily trafficked location adjacent to other small businesses and stores. This practice has averaged \$800,000 in collections the past three years on six days of hygiene. As the seller refers out almost all specialty procedures and orthodontics, this practice is poised for growth.



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Obituaries



Ronald A. Seltzer, DDS

Ronald A. Seltzer, D.D.S. (Ron), passed away peacefully at The Park Lane, a senior living community in Monterey, California having navigated the challenges of Alzheimer's at the end of a life well-lived. He was known for his gentle spirit, kindness, for being a gentleman, as well as for his humor laced with puns. He was cherished by his family and others he touched along life's way:

Dr. Seltzer was born with his twin sister, Muriel, at Adventist Health Glendale in California, but moved from Glendale to La Sierra with his twin sister, brother (Bud) and adoptive parents Fred and Betty Seltzer in 1950, where he attended Adventist elementary school through La Sierra College.

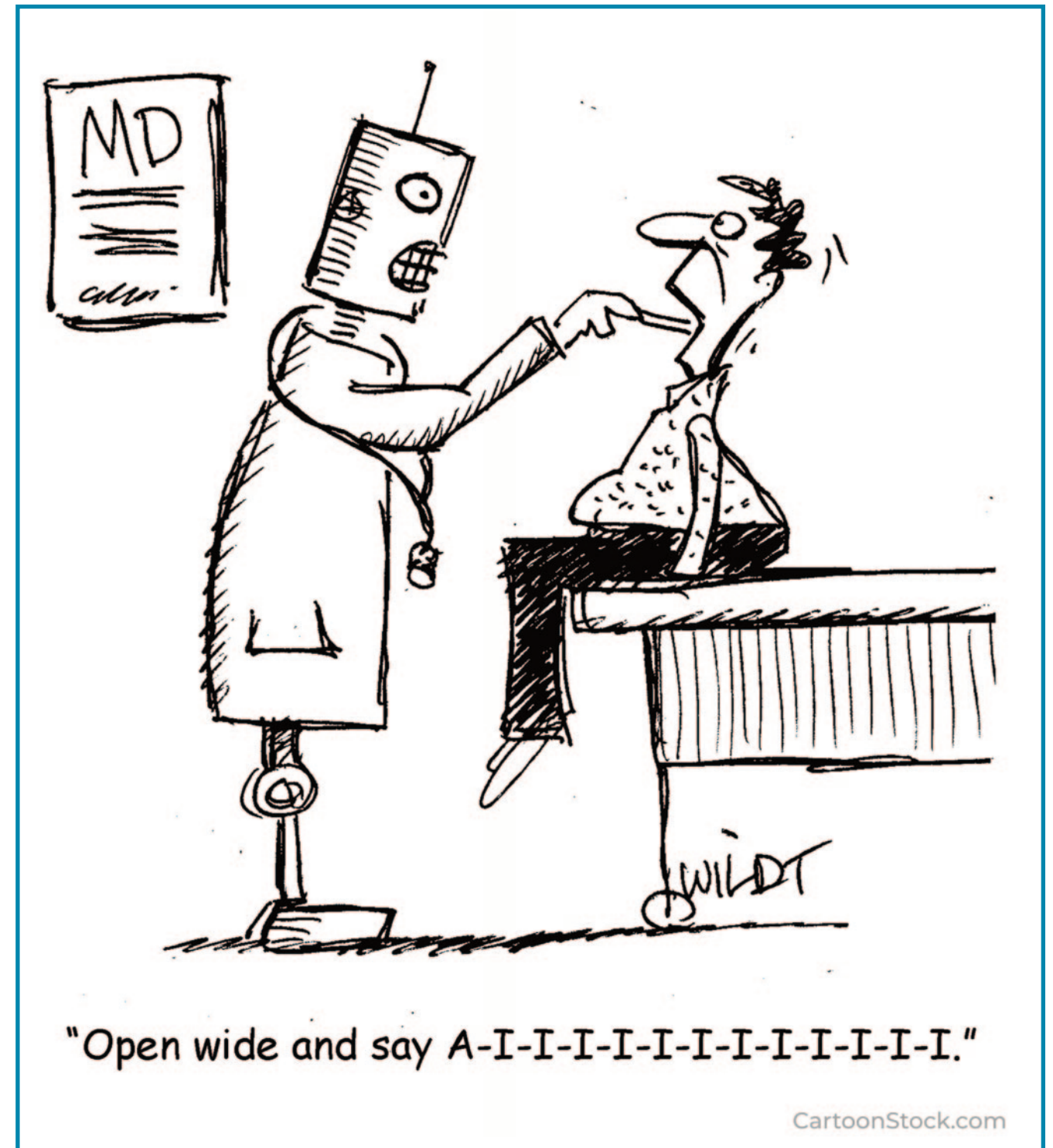
In 1970, he graduated Loma Linda University School of Dentistry, where he met and married ArvaDell Eckerman, R.D.H., and the newlyweds moved to the Monterey Peninsula, ultimately operating a dental office in Monterey for 34 years. When Dr. Seltzer retired from dentistry in 2005, he enjoyed volunteering as a driver for Meals on Wheels and the camaraderie of working with others for Hertz as a driver.

Dr Seltzer is survived by his loving wife of 53 years, ArvaDell; and their three daughters, Leilani Seltzer M.D (Tabor Dean), and twin daughters Malia Seltzer D.D.S. (Brent Mays) and Kealoha Seltzer Miller (James Miller D.P.T., D.C., E.M.G.), as well as his sister, Muriel Seltzer Jorgensen and his six grandchildren, Kierra, Garrett, Michael and Leila Dean and Brycen and Macy Mays. Additionally, Ron counted his nieces and nephews as treasures as well.

Ron's older, adoptive brother, E.C. (Bud) Seltzer M.D. was instrumental in assisting Ron financially through dental school, for which he was ever grateful. Furthermore, Ron was privileged to have known and loved his birth family (Lonsdales) in Iowa, where he still has many wonderful first cousins.

The family is especially grateful to the professional angels who cared for him at the end of life including the at-home caretakers Maria Adelitka Bennett and Lindsay Beutel, the staff at The Park Lane (especially the memory unit) as well as VNA/Hospice, the physicians and all who supported us during the difficult weeks in which he was declining from Alzheimer's.

Cartoon



Parting Shot



PHOTO: Artificial Intelligence generated

You guessed it, here is an AI-Generated Photo of our very own Monterey Bay Peninsula. This issue's Parting Shot comes courtesy of Chat-GPT: Beautiful! (And a little scary).

“*Artificial intelligence is growing up fast, as are robots whose facial expressions can elicit empathy and make your mirror neurons quiver.*”

— Diane Ackerman