Ohio Dental Association working on members’ behalf during COVID-19 pandemic

By ODA Staff

The Ohio Dental Association has been working diligently on members’ behalf from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. From advocacy efforts to providing information to emergency meetings of the Executive Committee to answering questions, ODA leadership and staff have been busy.

QuickBites

COVID-19 Update

This issue of the “ODA Today” is devoted to the COVID-19 pandemic. You will find information and resources as well as perspectives from our members throughout the publication.

We will come through these uncharted waters

Managing the ODA during the coronavirus pandemic state of emergency

From the Corner Office, page 2

The directive states that the following procedures should be delayed:

• Any cosmetic or aesthetic procedures, such as veneers, teeth bleaching, or cosmetic bonding
• All routine hygiene appointments
• Any orthodontic procedures not including those that relieve pain and infection or are trauma-related
• Initiation of any crowns, bridges, or dentures that do not address or prevent pain or restore normal oral functioning
• Any periodontal plastic surgery
• Extraction of asymptomatic non-carious teeth
• Recall visits for periodically healthy patients
• Delay all appointments for high risk patients, including ASA 2 and 3 patients, unless it is an emergency

The Ohio State Dental Board also urged dentists to consider the following additional measures:

• Use cell phone triage – use the cell phone to take a picture of the area and text to the dentist
• Have a detailed questionnaire/conversation before scheduling appointments and prior to any procedure about flu-like symptoms, travel abroad for self and family/friends/co-workers etc. to permit a thorough evaluation of the patient
• Consider taking the temperature of the patient at the outset
• Recodify scheduling high risk patients unless they need emergency treatment
• Careful evaluation of the need for scheduling of ASA 2 & 3 patients
• Use of 1% hydrogen peroxide rinse prior to examination of the oral cavity by the patient to reduce microbial load
• Use of rubber dam isolation & high Questions about COVID-19? Contact us!

(800) 282-1526 | dentist@oda.org | www.oda.org

Please be aware that information related to COVID-19 is changing at a rapid pace, so while this information is up to date as of the time it was sent to print, more recent and updated information may be available.

To view the most recent updates, the ODA has created a page of COVID-19 resources for dental offices in Ohio that can be viewed at https://oda.org/member-resources/covid-19/. Please understand that this information is not business or legal advice. Our goal is to give members resources to ensure that they are prepared when talking with their personal human resources staff, attorney or accountant.

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The ODA has been in contact with the governor’s office and state of Ohio to ensure that dentists would be able to provide care for patients with emergency dental situations.

The ODA advocated on members’ behalf by sending a letter to the U.S. Department of Labor asking for dentists to be exempt from certain provisions of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. At the time of publication, the ODA was awaiting a response.

The ODA has advocated for additional funding for unemployment benefits and other resources for unemployed dentists and dental staff.

The ODA has advocated in support of the state of Ohio making unemployment compensation immediately available.

The ODA has advocated for additional grants and loans for dentist small business owners.

The ODA has been in contact with private insurers, Medicaid and Medicaid HMOS asking them to cover services provided through technology in order to help triage dental patients and preserve PPE.

The ODA has been researching and providing information to members through email, oda.org, Facebook and Twitter.

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At the time, many organizations were still holding events. However, the state of Ohio and the city of Columbus had just canceled “The Arnold” — an annual sports festival in Columbus that attracts tens of thousands of athletes and spectators from around the world. It was a shock to many when the Arnold was cancelled and it got the attention of all meeting planners.

While the decision to cancel the ODA Leadership Institute seems like a no-brainer today, this was in the days before daily press conferences about the number of infections, hospitalizations and deaths due to the coronavirus in Ohio. Ultimately, the ODA Executive Committee made the difficult decision to cancel the 2020 Leadership Institute (just days later the state of Ohio would issue an order prohibiting any meeting with 100 or more attendees). As a result, many of the staff at the ODA had worked so hard to put together a class event and our members. At the time, I had no idea that this would get so much unwarranted attention.

On March 13, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine, Ohio Department of Health Director Dr. Amy Acton, and other state officials held their regular press conference providing updates related to the coronavirus situation. They specifically mentioned dental care providers, including hospitals, physicians, ambulatory surgical facilities, dentists and veterinarians, because they were planning to delay elective health care procedures. This included dental care providers, including hospitals, physicians, and veterinarians. It was a decision that made sense at the time, but it would ultimately lead to a decision about canceling the ODA Leadership Institute (just days later the state of Ohio would issue an order prohibiting any meeting with 100 or more attendees). As a result, many of the staff at the ODA had worked so hard to put together a class event and our members. At the time, I had no idea that this would get so much unwarranted attention.

The next day, on the morning of March 14, ODA President Dr. Sharon Parsons, who is a general dentist on the east side of Columbus, and I had a call with Gov. DeWine, Dr. Acton and other state officials. They explained the extreme need the healthcare system in Ohio will have for personal protective equipment (PPE) to be able to treat coronavirus patients. Accordingly, they indicated that the state of Ohio would issue an order directing all health care providers to delay elective procedures in order to preserve PPE.

Dr. Parsons and I explained the extreme hardship this decision would have on practitioners who do elective care. They said that any doctors who do elective care will be required to stop doing so in order to treat coronavirus patients. Accordingly, they indicated that the state of Ohio would issue an order directing all health care providers to delay elective procedures in order to preserve PPE.

The next day, on Sunday, March 15, ODA leaders met with representatives of the Ohio State Dental Board to develop guidance for providers treating surge in light of the upcoming order to delay all elective care. Some dental leaders came to the ODA offices in Columbus for the meeting held in our Mercer Boardroom, while others who were from other parts of the state called into the meeting. This was before the ODA developed its guidance on what urgent and emergency care was. After several hours of research, discussion, and some debate, the group came to a general consensus. That same day, the governor issued an Order closing all restaurants, except for takeout and delivery.

Not that long ago I remember saying to one of my friends “I have been working non-stop. I seriously need some time off.” They say to be careful of what you wish for. I do not mean this.

As many of you know, and probably many more suspect, I am a Type A, with all of the things, good and bad that come with it. Even though I am how I am wired, I do believe that life experiences can temper some of that. Looking back, I think that I used to be more quick to anger and jump at things. Even the smallest things would sometimes really bother me. Then 2019 happened. As day after day of you know, there were many tragedies in that year for me. One byproduct, however, is that it now takes more to anger me and I do not dwindle down to feeling negative as often as I did before. I am more able to step back and take in the larger view.

By no means am I suggesting that all of you need tragedies in your lives. Quite the contrary, I hope that none of you ever get any. I mean that by way of saying that sometimes things happen that we have absolutely no control over. Initially we fret and stew and work ourselves into a froth, only to realize that there is not much that we can do. With this pandemic, our profession, and our lives, I feel that we have been suspended for lack of a better word. We each, individually, want to do something to make this go away. We want our lives and our livelihoods back, and we want it now. I think that most of us have come to the conclusion that we are not going to get our wish any time soon. Whether that is good or bad remains to be seen. I have heard most of the debates about whether or not social distancing is the correct thing to do, as well as all of the arguments and statistics. Still, after all of that, I am sure that we believe in our business and my staff. I wish that I knew more about epi- demics, the balance of health and well-being of our families, friends and community in general against the health and well-being of my business. Am I being overly simplistic? I am sure that there will be plenty of time for me to work through these things before we get back to work. One of the things I have learned is the hard way is that I can work hard to regain business and employees who are hurt by this crisis.

We also discussed that dentists should still be allowed to provide emergency services in order to reduce the low point of presenting at hospital emergency rooms for oral health issues at a time when hospitals will be focused on managing the coronavirus crisis and non-emergency care. The state officials asked the ODA to represent with representatives of the Ohio State Dental Board to discuss issues for the dental profession in order to comply with the coming order to delay non-emergency care. After the call, Dr. Parsons and I discussed the surreal nature of the call and the current situation. She said “never in a million years did I think I would have to address something like this during a year as ODA president.” Not surprisingly, though, for any of you who know Dr. Parsons, she jumped into this situation with both feet – ready to represent and lead the dental profession and ODA during this crisis.

The next day, on Sunday, May 17, ODA leaders met with representatives of the Ohio State Dental Board to try to develop guidance for providers treating surge in light of the upcoming order to delay all elective care. Some dental leaders came to the ODA offices in Columbus for the meeting held in our Mercer Boardroom, while others who were from other parts of the state called into the meeting. This was before the ODA developed its guidance on what urgent and emergency care was. After several hours of research, discussion, and some debate, the group came to a general consensus. That same day, the governor issued an Order closing all restaurants, except for takeout and delivery.

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Law and legislation in a nationwide pandemic

We are truly in an unprecedented time when it comes to law making and the impact of the law on our society. When the governor made his first order during this nationwide pandemic it was truly an unprecedented decision. When the governor canceled the Arnold Sports Festival in Columbus I was shocked and puzzled by the unprecedented decision. When the governor made his first order during this pandemic it was truly an unprecedented time. The actions taken by the executive branch of government have created a scenario where small businesses are suffering. In a time of suffering there have been some positives that have come out of this due to the action of the legislature. In Ohio and on a national level the legislature has been willing to work together to come up with legislation that will help those in need. It seems to me that representatives and senators have come together to pass legislation with true bipartisanship.

In this unprecedented time I am proud to work for an association of dentists that care deeply about the patients and citizens of Ohio. Over the last month I have had phone or email conversations with many of you and in those conversations it has been clear to me that dentists are leaders in their local communities, and the ODA communicates that message in our lobbying efforts. Thank you for all you are doing in Ohio. The ODA staff will continue to work for you, and please reach out to us with questions. You can reach the ODA office at (800) 282-1526, and from there you will be directed to the voicemail of any staff member. We are checking these messages hourly and returning phone calls in the order we receive them.

ORDER, from page 1

• volume suction to limit aerosol in treatment procedures
• Proper disinfection protocol between patients with a possible repeat of the protocol for a second time

Finally, the OSDM provided this list of ideas to prevent over-crowding of waiting areas or the possible spread of infection:

• Consider having patients wait in their cars instead of the waiting areas to prevent inadvertent spread of the virus (call patient when surgical area is ready for treatment)
• Consider staggering appointment times to reduce waiting room exposure
• Consider rescheduling elective procedures
• Have front desk staff take measures to prevent direct exposure
• Have sterilization staff, lab technicians and auxiliary staff take adequate measures to prevent exposure.

• Proper disinfection protocol between patients with a possible repeat of the protocol for a second time
• Limit access to waiting room use to only patients. Accompanying individuals have to wait in their respective transportation
• Remove all magazines/toys etc. from waiting area to prevent contamination

The order to delay all non-essential surgeries and procedures remains "in full force and effect until the State of Emergency declared by the Governor no longer exists, or the Governor or the Ohio Department of Health rescinds or modifies the order." For the latest updates on this order and other information related to COVID-19, visit https://odohio.org/member-resources/covid-19/
ODA resources to check out while staying at home

By ODA Staff

During the state of Ohio’s Stay at Home Order, some dentists may find themselves with extra time available. The ODA has a few online resources available to keep dentists informed and prepared to return to their practices.

During the first week and half of Ohio’s Stay at Home Order, 185 members took the online opioid CE, 70 members downloaded the regulatory compliance guide and 15 signed up to watch a webinar about the ODA in-office membership plan.

“As a new practice owner, the ODA and ADA have been invaluable in helping to navigate, not only the ongoing pandemic, but also the regulatory environment and new CE requirements,” said Dr. Leah Buller, a general dentist in Strongsville. “In my attempt to make the most of my time delivery I remember driving home from the office that night and noticing that the parking lots of bars and restaurants were eerily empty.

On Monday, March 15, the Ohio State Dental Board issued a directive from the governor to all licensed dentists that you likely have already read a summary of which you can find on the front page of this issue of the “ODA Today” and the entire order is posted on the OSDB’s website.

It provided guidance as to what procedures are permissible and what should be delayed. The ODSD’s statement also provided tips on limiting patients’ potential exposure to coronavirus (e.g., cell phone triage, etc.). The OSDS’s message also encouraged dentists to consider offering telemedicine when appropriate.

On Wednesday, March 17, a day normally reserved for St. Patrick’s Day celebrations, Gov. DeWine and Dr. Acton announced the issuance of the Order, set to go into effect the following day, directing that “all non-essential or elective surgeries and procedures that utilize PPE should not be conducted.”

On Thursday, March 18, Dr. Parsons issued an ODA President’s Message to assist dentists in complying with the order and to remind them of their obligations as community leaders and respected professionals “to put the welfare of patients and staff, as well as the citizens of Ohio above all else.”

By Friday, March 20, it became apparent that Gov. DeWine was considering a statewide stay-at-home order. The ODA reached out to the governor and his staff reminding them of the importance of designating dental offices as essential businesses so that dentists can still treat emergencies and keep patients from presenting to hospitals or EDs for oral health issues during this public health crisis.

On Sunday, March 22, the state of Ohio issued an order, to take effect the following day, directing that “all persons stay at home unless engaged in essential work or activity.” The ODA issued a Facebook live event providing the latest information on the coronavirus emergency to our members. To date, it is one of our most viewed videos ever.

We know our members are thirsty for information but unfortunately not all sources are necessarily credible. In fact, we have been monitoring the coronavirus-related scams targeted at small businesses and dental offices. We are striving to be timely and accurate in all of our communications and are demonstrating that organized dentistry (ODA, ADA, and local component dental societies) continues to be a trusted source of information for dentists in this crisis, and always.

The above chain of events has sent shockwaves through the dental profession, the ODA, the health care system, the economy, businesses, workers and families. Every dentist and every dental office in Ohio has been impacted. Dentists who own their own practices struggle to maintain their businesses, figure out what to do about the staff, and make arrangements to treat patient emergencies. Other dentists are worried about their jobs while dental residents and graduating dental students are worried about their future prospects.

The ODA has scrambled to provide the most up-to-date information about all kinds of issues including unemployment benefits, Small Business Administration Loans, and new federal mandates for paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave. In just the first two weeks after the order to delay elective procedures, the ODA staff has been working day and night to answer more than 500 calls, texts and emails on a slew of different issues. With the passage of every new piece of legislation in Washington the information related to disaster relief loans and other possible assistance changes. We work to keep our members up to date by posting the latest information on www.oda.org and the ODA Facebook page and Twitter feed.

In the days leading up to the state’s shutdown order, I had the ODA’s IT consultant scrambling to make sure ODA staff had the means to work from home so we could continue to provide valuable updates and guidance to our members and engaged a key advocate to make sure dentistry’s voice is being heard during this crisis. We also continue to provide assistance and answer our members’ questions related to various matters including First Transactions, corporate law, family and mental health legal issues, tax preparation, and telemedicine.

As the days go by, the number of issues continues to grow. We have gotten questions about unemployment benefits, SBA loans, the CARES Act, cell phone triage, telemedicine, aerosols, infection control, PPE, loan options, staffing, CE, payroll taxes, and many others. We are here to answer your questions, direct you to available resources and help you through this unprecedented time. We also have ODA staff members who have been impacted by the coronavirus emergency, and we worry about them and their families as they scramble for child care or to care for a loved one or a parent.

I have a daughter in high school and one in college. While all this was hitting, I received a message that my older daughter was required to move out of her dorm at The Ohio State University. My wife and I hurriedly loaded up the SUV and moved our daughter back home. Since we are now all staying at home just about 24/7, it has brought us closer as a family even as we try social distancing. There are no activities so we regularly eat dinner together for the first time in years. We are only a couple weeks in and it is all good so far. This goes significantly longer as some predict, I am skeptical this family bliss will continue. We’ll see.

This crisis is a challenge for everyone – but especially the dental profession. The ODA continues to work on your behalf and your leaders – especially the members of the ODA Executive Committee – have been particularly engaged to ensure that we are in position to provide assistance to all of our members in their time of need. We will all get through this together. Hang in there.

View these and other resources at www.oda.org

The Firm for Dental Professionals

Areas of practice include:

• Administrative Law before State and Federal Courts
• Dental Malpractice Defense
• Practice-related Business Transactions

Individual dentists and dental organizations are also represented in various matters, including: Amendment litigation (e.g., advertising), judicial appeals of state agency actions, representation of actions against state agencies, and disputes with PPOs and DSOs.

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The Ohio Dental Association created a regulatory compliance guide to help ODA members ensure they are in compliance with Ohio regulations. The guide – “Ohio Dentist Advisor: Your Guide to Regulatory Compliance” – includes summaries, checklists and fillable forms to help offices ensure they are in compliance.

To download the guide, visit https://oda.org/member-resources/resource-guides/ for dentists who need help logging into the ODA website or accessing the guide, please email jackie@oda.org.
**Membership renewal due by April 30**

The ODA has been here for you during the COVID-19 pandemic. If you have not already done so, please consider supporting the ODA and your profession by renewing your membership. This will also ensure that you continue to receive important updates, resources and information from the ODA after the membership dues deadline on April 30.

Please renew online at www.oda.org/renew, by fax at (614) 486-0381, by mail to Ohio Dental Association, P.O. Box 734508 Chicago, IL 60673-4508 or by phone at (800) 282-1526.

If you are a retired life member or have already paid your dues, thank you! You do not need to take any action.

**Business resources for dental offices during COVID-19 pandemic**

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the ODA has been keeping members updated about business resources for dental offices. This information changes on a daily basis, so please visit www.oda.org for details on:
- SBA loans
- Unemployment resources
- The CARES Act
- The Families First Coronavirus Relief Act
- And more

For information on these business resources and other topics related to the coronavirus pandemic for dentists in Ohio, visit https://oda.org/member-resources/covid-19/.

**Watch out for COVID-19 scams**

The U.S. Department of Justice warns that a number of scams related to COVID-19 have been reported.

According to the Justice Department, reported scams include:
- Individuals and businesses selling fake cures for COVID-19 online and engaging in other forms of fraud
- Phishing emails from entities posing as the World Health Organization or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Malicious websites and apps that appear to share virus-related information to gain and lock access to your devices until payment is received
- Seeking donations for illegitimate or non-existent charitable organizations.

For more details on this and information on how to report a potential scam, visit https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus.

The Better Business Bureau also has several resources on potential scams related to COVID-19 and how to avoid them. For more details, visit https://www.bbb.org/council/coronavirus/

**Are you receiving our communications about COVID-19?**

The Ohio Dental Association has been sending out regular communications about COVID-19 via email. If you are not receiving our emails, please email dentist@oda.org to ensure we have your correct email address on file. You can also add dentist@oda.org to your address book to help make sure you receive our emails.

You can also view our updates on Facebook by liking our page at www.facebook.com/ohiodentalsoc or on Twitter at Twitter.com/ohiodentalassoc.

Updates are also posted on our website at https://oda.org/member-resources/covid-19/.

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**Apply for a scholarship or grant from the ODA Foundation**

Applications for the ODA Foundation’s 2020 scholarships and grants are now open.

Available scholarship opportunities for 2020 include:
- Dental Student Scholarship for dental students who are Ohio residents, members of ASDA and who will be D2s, D3s and D4s in Fall 2020.
- Mercer Leadership Scholarship for OSU dental students entering their D4 year in Fall 2020 who have been Ohio residents for at least five years, are members of ASDA and have a commitment to leadership in dental school and their community.
- Community Dental Health Coordinator Scholarship for individuals applying to a CDHC program who currently are employed by Ohio oral health related organizations.

The deadline for all scholarship applications is June 24.

The ODA Foundation also offers access to dental care grants for Ohio-based oral health related programs that reach out to the underserved. Applicants must be 501(c)3 organizations in Ohio. The application process is a two-step process with a letter of inquiry due by May 13 and the grant proposal due by June 3.

Scholarship and grant application packets can be downloaded at www.oda.org/community-involvement/oda-foundation/oda-f-grants-and-scholarships/.

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**ODA office closed for holiday**

Callahan Memorial Award Commission

*Due to the current stay at home order, these meetings are tentative and will likely be conference calls if they are held*
What is the goal for your practice?

- Practice sales and acquisitions
- Exit strategy consulting
- Appraisals and analysis
- Practice protection plan
- DSO transitions
- Associate placement

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(614) 401-2400 x229
choicetransitions.com
Coping with fear, anxiety about dental practice changes during COVID-19 pandemic

By ODA Staff

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many dentists have experienced a drastic change to how they practice, and many may be facing fear and anxiety related to the financial and other implications of this. The “ODA Today” spoke with Arianna Galligher, LISW-S, associate director of the STAR Trauma Recovery Center & Partial Hospitalization & Intensive Outpatient Programs at the OSU Wexner Medical Center and Harding Hospital, to answer some common questions that dentists may be facing during this crisis.

Q: Many dentists have suddenly found themselves in a difficult financial situation where they are uncertain about their future. Many owner dentists have shut down or significantly reduced their practices and may be facing fear and anxiety associated with this?

A: First, it’s important to recognize that a certain level of anxiety makes sense when things outside our control happen and we don’t have all the answers about what will happen next. Feeling anxious doesn’t mean the worst-case scenario is imminent, but in situations like this it can give us the motivation we need to consider what “Plan B” may look like. Sometimes it helps to get a little concrete. Instead of worrying about the “what if...” it can be helpful to sit down with a pen and paper to brainstorm about, “if then.”

Q: Many dentists are very close with their staff and even consider them to be like family, but unfortunately may have had to lay them off. Some dentists may be facing guilt over this situation. How can they deal with this type of guilt?

A: For dentists who’ve had to lay off staff, it’s important to remember that the decision was made to protect the public during this time. Expressing regret that lay-offs were necessary, and offering reassurance to staff that their jobs will be waiting for them when it’s safe to re-open can go a long way toward maintaining healthy relationships with staff. Encouraging those who’ve been laid off to file for unemployment benefits so that they can receive some income during this time can also help with coping.

Q: Many dentists build close relationships with their patients over many years, but currently cannot see them regularly. How can they cope with this disconnect from their patients?

A: Especially while many practices are not scheduling in-person visits, or have temporarily closed their offices, it may be beneficial for dentists to consider scheduling a quick phone call with patients to let them know you’re thinking of them during this challenging time. A simple act of kindness like taking a virtual museum tour, reading, playing a musical instrument, dancing, baking, or crocheting a blanket or learn a new skill like learning a new language.

Q: As health care workers, some dentists and dental staff members are afraid of becoming infected with COVID-19. How can they cope with this fear?

A: Gather information from reputable sources, follow recommendations about social distancing and good hand hygiene, and we don’t have all the answers about what will happen next. Feeling anxious makes sense when things outside our control happen and we don’t have all the answers about what will happen next. Feeling anxious doesn’t mean the worst-case scenario is imminent, but in situations like this it can give us the motivation we need to consider what “Plan B” may look like. Sometimes it helps to get a little concrete. Instead of worrying about the “what if...” it can be helpful to sit down with a pen and paper to brainstorm about, “if then.”

Q: Dentists are used to a lot of social interaction and mental stimulation. How can they cope with social distancing?

A: Many people are finding it helpful to utilize technology to assist with remaining active and social during this time. FaceTime, Google Hangouts, Skype, Facebook Messenger Video, or Zoom are popular platforms where people can videochat to stay connected with one another. Some are using this “forced downtime” to engage with a hobby like taking a virtual museum tour, reading, playing a musical instrument, dancing, baking, or crocheting a blanket or learn a new skill like learning a new language.

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A: Gather information from reputable sources, follow recommendations about social distancing and good hand hygiene, and we don’t have all the answers about what will happen next. Feeling anxious makes sense when things outside our control happen and we don’t have all the answers about what will happen next. Feeling anxious doesn’t mean the worst-case scenario is imminent, but in situations like this it can give us the motivation we need to consider what “Plan B” may look like. Sometimes it helps to get a little concrete. Instead of worrying about the “what if...” it can be helpful to sit down with a pen and paper to brainstorm about, “if then.”

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**Dental Insurance Corner**

**COVID-19, tele-dentistry and dental insurance**

By Christopher A. Moore, MA
ODA Director of Dental Services

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ohio Department of Health and the Ohio State Dental Board have mandated that Ohio dentists defer all non-essential and elective procedures in order to preserve the availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) and prevent inadvertent spread of the virus. Dentists are expected to continue to provide for their patients’ emergency dental needs and in doing so help keep those patients out of the state’s hospital emergency rooms.

In addition to requesting that dentists donate surplus personal protective equipment and supplies to their local emergency management agency (https://webtraining.dps.ohio.gov/ohio县CountyEMA/Directory/County/emall_en.aspx) the government’s directive has specifically called on Ohio dentists to reschedule elective procedures including, but not limited to:

- **Delay all appointments for high risk patients, including ASA 2 and 3 patients, unless it is an emergency.**
- **Any periodontal plastic surgery.**
- **Any periodontal scraping and/or root planing.**
- **Any per-oral plastic surgery.**
- **Any extraction of asymptomatic non-carious teeth.**
- **Recall visits for periodontally healthy patients.**
- **Any operative office visit re-evaluation (limited re-evaluation) and post-operative office visit re-evaluation.**

The ODBB also called upon the dentists to, among other dental practice management controls, use cell phone triage whereby the patient or parent/guardian texts a cell phone picture of the area to the dentist.

Questions have been raised relative to if and how dental insurance companies and other third-party payers could or would provide reimbursement to dentists who follow the ODBB’s cell phone triage protocol.

Ohio’s tele-dentistry law

Tele-dentistry is generally defined as the use of a broad variety of technologies and means to deliver virtual dental services. It is a collection of systems and methodologies and not a specific service. Ohio does have a specific tele-dentistry law as a result of an ODA access to care legislative initiative. This law, however, does not have much practical relevance and does not have much practical relevance to the discussion of providing reimbursement for emergency dental services given the restrictions that are currently in place in Ohio.

The law allows dentists who hold a permit to delegate to qualified dental auxiliaries (EDAs) the ability to perform services without the dentist being physically present at a location where the service is to be provided. The services that are permitted under this law, however, are largely prohibited to be done by anyone, including dentists, under the current provide-emergency-dental-care-only restrictions.

Insurance company responses to pay dentists

Many insurance companies have already begun reimbursing dentists for providing care via tele-dentistry technology. They have done so without the need for the ODBB to take any action relative to Ohio’s tele-dentistry law. They have simply changed their payment code criteria in order to provide reimbursement.

During the time of this public health emergency, providing a patient’s dental benefit plan does not specifically exclude it and the patient still has coverage and/or benefits available, many carriers will provide benefits for the D0140 (problem focused limited oral evaluation) whether the service is provided in a dental office or virtually. Some plans provide reimbursement for separate reimbursement for either of the two tele-dentistry procedure codes.

Most insurers do not provide benefits for the D9311 (consultation with a medical health care professional) or if and how dental insurance companies and other third-party payers could or would provide reimbursement to dentists who follow the ODBB’s cell phone triage protocol.

ODA members who would like to submit a dental insurance related question, problem or concern may do so by sending the appropriate information to the ODA, Dental Insurance Working Group, 1370 Dublin Road, Columbus, OH 43215, or 614-486-0381 FAX, or chrsmi@oda.org. To see past issues of the Dental Insurance Corner, visit www.oda.org/news and choose the category “ODA Today” and subcategory “Dental Insurance Corner.”

See TELE-DENTISTRY, page 9

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The American Dental Association and the ODA have reached out to numerous dental insurers to determine their benefit policies and are working with them to ensure appropriate benefits are delivered to all involved. The ADA has developed an excellent, regularly updated resource, COVID-19 Coding and Billing Interim Guidance, that may be accessed at https://success.ada.org/~media/ADACPS/Files/COVID/ADA_COVID_Cod ing_and_Billing_Guidance.pdf?utm_source=cpsorg&utm_medium=covid-cps-virus-lp&utm-content=cv-pm-coding-billing-guidance&utm-campaign=covid-19.

Dental benefit plan administrators have reported that a large number of their staff are now working remotely. Some carriers have had to retrain entire units after personnel have fallen ill or been forced into self-quarantine. While these occurrences have not largely impacted the timeliness of electronic submitted claims, they have adversely affected the timeliness of paper claim submissions and have not largely impacted the process of telehealth during the COVID-19 nationwide public health emergency. This notification became effective immediately on March 17, 2020.

This applies to tele-dentistry provided for any reason, regardless of whether the service is related to the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions related to COVID-19. Under OCR’s notification, dentists may use popular applications that allow for video chats, including Apple FaceTime, Facebook Messenger video chat, Google Hangouts video, Skype or Zoom, to provide tele-dentistry without risk that OCR might seek to impose a penalty for non-compliance with the HIPAA Rules related to the good faith provision of telehealth services during the COVID-19 nationwide public health emergency. OCR has encouraged practitioners to notify their patients that these third-party applications potentially introduce privacy risks and that dentists should enable all available encryption and privacy modes when using such applications.

While the following does not represent official ODA recommended language, it is provided as a sample to assist ODA members in developing a notice they may use with their patients: “I agree that iname of practice may communicate with me electronically using remote communications technology e.g., cell phone, text, video conferencing, email. I understand that there is some level of risk to electronic communication and accept that risk/waive any HIPAA concerns. I understand that name of practice will use reasonable care in securing information provided via these forms of communication. I am responsible for providing the practice any updates to my cell phone and my email address. I may withdraw my consent to electronic communications by notifying the office.”

While OCR instructed that dentists who seek additional privacy protections for tele-dentistry while using video communication products should provide such services through technology vendors that are HIPAA compliant and will enter into HIPAA business associate agreements (BAA) in connection with the provision of their video communication products, it also indicated that it “will not impose penalties against providers for the lack of a BAA with video communication vendors or any other noncompliance with the HIPAA Rules that relates to the good faith provision of telehealth services during the COVID-19 nationwide public health emergency.”

The OCR notice does not address email or text communications. The ADA has reported that while HIPAA does not pro-

### Numbers to know

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American Dental Association</th>
<th>(800) 621-8099 or (312) 440-2500</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dental OPTIONS</td>
<td>888-765-6789</td>
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<td>Ohio Department of Health</td>
<td>(614) 466-3543</td>
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<td>Ohio Dental Association</td>
<td>(800) 282-1526 or (614) 486-2700</td>
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<td>Ohio State Dental Board</td>
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### Contact us today for a free, confidential consultation!

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omni-pg.com
Just Think About It

Paul S. Casamassimo, DDS, MS, FAAPD, FRCSEd, Guest Columnist

N95 Masks I Get
But No Toilet Paper - Huh?

I asked the “ODA Today” staff to let me try to put some levity in this issue devoted to the COVID-19 pandemic, so I pulled my original column and now pose a tongue-in-cheek conundrum that I’ve been “sitting on” since all this started.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed our way of life and we’ll look back on it years from now and recall the best and worst of it; we’ll get through this, but some questions may never be answered – like where did all the toilet paper go? Why?

When I first heard about the run on toilet paper, I just assumed it was a knee-jerk reaction to an impending catastrophe like a hurricane or flood. But then the shelves emptied quite selectively, also losing all types of cleaning supplies suggesting a virus-specific method to the madness. Then I discovered that CDC does not list GI symptoms for coronavirus, so the plot thickened!

As a scientist, I looked for evidence, but found none. I tried to recall my own developmental history with toilet paper and of course had no recollection of skill acquisition, technique perfecting, and other skills that of course had no recollection of skill acquisition, technique perfecting, and other.

The Explorer

Matthew J. Messina, DDS
Executive Editor

Lasts and Firsts

As we struggle to adjust to “the new normal” that is life in the world of COV-ID-19, I’m reminded that today is unique. We only get one it.

Denise, my wife of 32 years and a professor in The OSU Division of Dental Hygiene, posted the following on her Facebook page. As I feel it accurately captures the feelings of so many people, I’m printing it here with her permission.

My heart is aching for my senior (Brian ND ’20) and my seniors (in dental hygiene) of course. It’s finally time for many years of hard work, tears and dedication to their futures. It is finally time for their last day of college are filled with celebrations of success, technique perfecting, and other.

We also are experiencing many “firsts.” Not all of them positive. The time many people have ever been laid off or unemployed. The first time businesses have closed. I never thought I would see the day that bars, restaurants, and dental offices would be shut down. It’s the first time that many people are working from home!

We can rail at the unfairness of it all. We curse an unseen enemy. Officials state that we are at war with the virus, but it is tough to conceptualize being “at war” with something we can’t see, smell, or touch. How do we know we are winning? How does the virus surrender? Home use of hand sanitizer be a space safe from the stresses of work. Now work has invaded home and recreation refuge that may be challenging.

It’s natural to be afraid and want to go back to what we know and the way things used to be. I hope that at some point we’ll look in the rearview mirror and see the “old way” as antiquated and almost bizarre.

Creating new “firsts” takes courage. Throughout history, people respond to threats with activity. The destruction of the status quo was met with a terrible resolve and determination to make a difference. We’re seeing that now as the country, and the world bands together to support each other. The face encouraging signs were the videos coming out of Italy, one showing opera singer Maurizio Marchini serenading quarantined Florence each night, and another recording families coming out on their balconies and singing together across the alley. On one hand, the professional singer was giving of his talents to the enjoyment and happiness of others. The bad neighborhood karaoke was the shared hope of a group of strangers, choosing to sing and defy the attempts by the virus to divide people and keep them isolated. The worse the voices, the louder they sang! That’s resolve in the face of adversity!

It is important to grieve the loss of the “lasts.” That is a real source of sadness and we need to deal with the grief of lost opportunity. It’s ok to be angry at the virus for what it has taken from us. But, as we move beyond that, it’s beneficial to embrace the “firsts” and accept the challenge to make them matter.

It’s a new world. Hug your family and friends. Count your blessings and look for new opportunities. Today will only be here once. We need to revel in the day and make the most of it!

Dr. Messina may be reached at docmessina@7@gmail.com.
Thoughts and experiences with the coronavirus

It’s not lost on me that the last column I wrote for “ODA Today” was about getting a job in dentistry, and now I sit here unemployed.

We are living through a pandemic, hospitals running low on PPE and ventilators, restaurants and dental offices closed for regular business, no definitive end in sight. The rate at which I’m receiving email updates about COVID-19 makes having linear thoughts almost impossible.

We are starting to realize that the rules of yesterday don’t apply anymore, and when we make it to the other side, our country and its people will be different as well. It’s all a little overwhelming, isn’t it?

There are some tactics that have worked for me in order to develop a positive attitude about our current situation. I share them not to make light of the situation, but to shift our focus and help us get through it.

1) Accepting the Current Situation

I can’t believe how quickly things have changed across America. In February we heard about the outbreak in China and assumed it could never get that bad here. We were all wrong! One of the things I’ve assumed it could never get that bad here.

News reports of this “novel coronavirus” were to me about something that China was dealing with, yet seemed poised to take the role of this year’s illness that we should be wary of. But hadn’t we heard these things before? Swine flu, avian flu, even the number letter designations (H1N1, H2N3, and the like) had become familiar vocabulary and this “corona-thing” seemed to be the natural next candidate, complete with the jokes and memes on social media. Oh, how familiarity and complacency can be such a snare.

And so it was, no longer than three weeks ago, that my office staff and I were setting a euphonious pitch and we were setting a direction and purpose.

2) Finding the Positive in this “New Normal”

Realizing that yes, I’ll be out of work (outside of dental emergencies) for the next few weeks, allowed me to reframe what those next few weeks would look like. I feel fortunate that I have control over how I want my day to be structured, what I want to accomplish, and how I want to continue to cultivate relationships. Maintaining a sense of gratitude has helped me stay positive and grounded in the midst of the chaos. I hope to develop my habit of gratitude to outlast the pandemic and continue to flourish.

3) Being Intentional with Time

Each evening, I put together a list of a few key activities I want to focus on executing on the following day. I’m finding myself spending more time reviewing finances, ICE in case of emergency, planning, and creating goals for the next few years. I have been dedicating time to continuing dental education and finally completed the ODA’s free opioid CE class. I’ve been spending time with my husband at home and other family members virtually, and have been trying out new recipes and free at-home workouts. Fortunately, I am able to allocate my time to focus on what is most important to me during this period.

I believe we will see a paradigm shift and continue to flourish.

We will be our best if we go together

We have now added COVID-19 to the list of acronyms that denote benchmarks in our history. These are times that will be remembered as the guides and bumpers dictating our thoughts and directions for life as we thought we knew it. In several conversations, I have given my perspective on this current epoch as a combination of 9/11, Y2K, and the energy crisis of the ’70s, seasoned with a pinch of the blizzard of ’76 and ’77. Usually I prefaced those comments with the phrase, “Never in my lifetime have I seen …”

News reports of this “novel coronavirus” were to me about something that China was dealing with, yet seemed poised to take the role of this year’s illness that we should be wary of. But hadn’t we heard these things before? Swine flu, avian flu, even the number letter designations (H1N1, H2N3, and the like) had become familiar vocabulary and this “corona-thing” seemed to be the natural next candidate, complete with the jokes and memes on social media. Oh, how familiarity and complacency can be such a snare.

And so it was, no longer than three weeks ago, that my office staff and I were busy doing our thing – taking care of our patients. I remember the most recent team meeting where we had discussed updated production goals and job responsibilities as we had just added an additional hygienist, an insurance coordinator, and had filled a position vacated by our office manager who recently relocated to the Carolinas. The family atmosphere that we have worked hard to cultivate over the past 24 years, with both patients and employees, seemed to be turning to a euphonic pitch and we were setting goals. That was then …

The week of March 9th is when I learned how to say, “COVID” and things started getting real. Canceling school? Church?? LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE???

Our practice was not unaware of the current state of things and we began measures aimed at reducing exposure of the “high-risk” patients rescheduling their appointments as well as heightening our already high standards of infection control. At that point, my personal leadership tenet of “seeming first and farthest” became a fleeting vapor in the wake of the constant influx of new information from the CDC, ADA, ODA and the OSDB. Emails, texts and social media messages from colleagues rattled my phone as we all began to sift through and attempt to interpret information about emergent versus elective procedures. In my world, our own plans were being spawned as my hygienists were receiving their own emails from the dental board, triggering questions about the “reschedule all emergency” versus elective procedures. In my mind, if we go together, we will be our best.

Focusing on what I could control gave this time away from our daily work. It’s all a little overwhelming, isn’t it?

And now I sit here (outside of dental emergencies) for the next few weeks, allowed me to reframe what those next few weeks would look like. I feel fortunate that I have control over how I want my day to be structured, what I want to accomplish, and how I want to continue to cultivate relationships. Maintaining a sense of gratitude has helped me stay positive and grounded in the midst of the chaos. I hope to develop my habit of gratitude to outlast the pandemic and continue to flourish.

I believe we will see a paradigm shift and continue to flourish.
I never thought that at the very beginning of my career I would be facing one of the greatest challenges of my life as a dentist and a human being: a global pandemic. None of us thought we would have to completely adjust every aspect of our lives in order to combat and live through the first pandemic of the modern age. Writing that sentence just seems so old, but rather than dwell on unanswerable questions, we choose to keep pushing forward and come together for the good of our patients, our staff and ourselves.

I am the chief resident at the Mercy Medical Center GPR in Canton and I would like to share with all of you how we have adjusted to treating our patients during this pandemic. As soon as the request to stop all elective procedures came through, the residency jumped into action, not waiting until it was mandated. We knew that it was our responsibility to ensure that dental emergencies would not be clogging up and draining the resources of the ED department at the hospital. We made sure our local dental community knew that if they were not able to treat dental emergencies during this time to encourage their patients to come to the residency to be treated. We wanted to be a beacon and leader of the dental community in Stark County and we achieved that goal.

I am exceptionally proud that every member of Mercy Dental Services Department has stepped up to ensure our patients are not being left without options for treatment and that we are allowing our doctors, nurses and every member of the ED staff to use their resources to treat the patients who need it most. We have put in place strict procedures and protocols to ensure the safety of our patients, staff and ourselves during this time. The ability to provide high quality dentistry is still achievable under these temporary treatment guidelines that have been mandated, and the residency is proof of that. While it can be scary to start being treated patients who may have been exposed to or have the virusJoey, I put those feelings aside and decided it was my duty to accept those risks in order to serve my patients. That is what it means to be a healthcare provider and I have never been more proud to be a part of this community.

We have also started to collect extra PPE from the dental community to place into a stockpile that can be accessed by the hospital when it is needed in the weeks to come. While we may be doing more didactic than clinical work right now, I am confident that I am getting an exceptional post-graduate education. Mercy Medical Center has embraced the residency program as an essential component to help get through this pandemic and they should be commended for realizing the value of the dental profession as a vital component to overall health and well-being.

On a personal note, while I am proud of the work my residency has been doing to keep our patients healthy and safe, I am nervous about what is going to happen once residency ends in a few months. Two weeks before this hit and our profession was brought to a halt, I was holding a contract for my dream job. Everything I worked for was coming to fruition; the job I had always dreamed of was locked down and it was back in my hometown. The dentists I would be joining are some of the best in the business and the greatest people I know, and I could enjoy my last few months of residency without worrying about a job. Then a week after dental offices began to close I was informed my job was on hold. It was a devastating message to receive. All I could do was sit at my desk and just stare at the wall for a better part of 30 minutes, I couldn’t speak. As I processed the emotions over the next week or so I began to feel guilty about how I was feeling. Every single person in the country is feeling this way and I felt I was being selfish for being upset. I assumed that the future was now not clear and set. Everything is unknown at this moment, so it is okay for all of us to feel whatever is going on in us right now.

While I have been assured that my job is not canceled, only on hold/delayed, there is still a sense of dread that I cannot shake. How can it be guaranteed that I will be employed after residency? Unfortunately, that is something I cannot control and I cannot change. I will not know what is going to happen until it happens. As a dentist, I never thought this particular issue would be something that caused me such great emotional and physical stress. I am sure all of you have all been feeling the same, but in a way that is unique to you and I am here to tell you that it is okay to have those feelings. Unknowns can be fear inducing, but we must navigate through this together to get through the storm and come out on the other side.

I encourage you all to stay positive and while we must practice physical distancing we must also stay socially connected. Use this time to call your friends, family and even your staff to let them know how much they mean to you. This will pass and, while it may take some time, we must be ready to get back to work and band together as a community to ensure that our patients are the number one priority.

“ODA Today” by visiting www.oda.org. Like the Ohio Dental Association Facebook page! fb.me/ohiodentalassoc

Best from page 11

my colleagues across the state. We would remain a team but, for the time being, we would not be able to work together. My wife and I quickly offered to help in any way possible in the event that we were needed. As the main source of support, we realized this pandemic was brought to a halt, I was holding a contract for my dream job. Everything I worked for was coming to fruition; the job I had always dreamed of was locked down and it was back in my hometown. The dentists I would be joining are some of the best in the business and the greatest people I know, and I could enjoy my last few months of residency without worrying about a job. Then a week after dental offices began to close I was informed my job was on hold. It was a devastating message to receive. All I could do was sit at my desk and just stare at the wall for a better part of 30 minutes, I couldn’t speak. As I processed the emotions over the next week or so I began to feel guilty about how I was feeling. Every single person in the country is feeling this way and I felt I was being selfish for being upset. I assumed that the future was now not clear and set. Everything is unknown at this moment, so it is okay for all of us to feel whatever is going on in us right now.

While I have been assured that my job is not canceled, only on hold/delayed, there is still a sense of dread that I cannot shake. How can it be guaranteed that I will be employed after residency? Unfortunately, that is something I cannot control and I cannot change. I will not know what is going to happen until it happens. As a dentist, I never thought this particular issue would be something that caused me such great emotional and physical stress. I am sure all of you have all been feeling the same, but in a way that is unique to you and I am here to tell you that it is okay to have those feelings. Unknowns can be fear inducing, but we must navigate through this together to get through the storm and come out on the other side.

I encourage you all to stay positive and while we must practice physical distancing we must also stay socially connected. Use this time to call your friends, family and even your staff to let them know how much they mean to you. This will pass and, while it may take some time, we must be ready to get back to work and band together as a community to ensure that our patients are the number one priority.

Thoughts, from page 11

On the other side of this pandemic, we realize that waking up without a cough or difficulty breathing is the true blessing. These are the days we recognize those who are the real heroes: the first responders and those health professionals on the front lines of COVID-19. Although there will be many deaths and much instability as a result of this pandemic, our nation will get through this like all other tragedies, and I hope that as a result our community will be better aligned with our values.

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Associate Dentist wanted for a busy, well-established practice in North Canton, Ohio. This is a full time position with a well-trained experienced staff. Great patient base, fully computerized office, including CAD CAM design. Practice is FFS only and compensation would be a guaranteed minimum plus production. To inquire call (330) 958-6390 or send CV to NorthCantonDOS@gmail.com.

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Associate position available in Kettering, Ohio 2 days per week. Opportunity to increase to 3-4 days per week. Please call Mr. Sullivan @ (937) 430-4317.


Dentist needed – up to $25,000 sign-on bonus! Our Dentists enjoy no weekends, no evenings, and summers off! Smile Prodigy is the nation’s largest in school dental program, providing comprehensive care to children who would not receive dental program, providing comprehensive care. Contact Priscila at 614-797-0469 or priscila@coshoctondental.com.


Bracing, orthodontics, restorative dentistry, & feel comfortable working w/children. If interested, e-mail info@fulltenkampfamilydentistry.com.

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Southwest Ohio dentist selling 3 year collections per year. Great staff, 4 days per week. High cash flow. Appraised at $550,000. Highly motivated to sell, make offer. For info: phjm@yankee.com or (937) 271-9951.

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Practice for sale, Washington C.H. 1,000 square foot Dental Building with off street parking. Three equipped operatories, lab, and business office and private office. Includes all equipment, supplies, and patient records. For more information call (740) 355-3861.

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