COVID-19 Vaccine Finally Made Available to Dental Health Care Providers

For the better part of the past 10 months, people all over the world have been asking when there would be a viable vaccine for the COVID-19 virus. Dental health care professionals in Massachusetts have been part of that group, but hope appeared on the horizon with the January 21, 2021, announcement from Governor Charlie Baker that the state has opened the COVID-19 vaccination to all remaining groups in Phase 1 of the state’s vaccine distribution plan, including dental professionals who provide patient-facing care. This was welcome news to the Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) and our members after weeks of frustration and an initial lack of cooperation from the state. Upon hearing the news, the MDS immediately notified all dental providers in the state via email and website and social media postings, encouraging those members who are interested in receiving the vaccine to view the online map of locations providing vaccines to eligible individuals and schedule an appointment as soon as possible. (Note: As MDS CONNECTION was readying for publishing, the state was announcing more vaccine sites at a rapid pace. See the map at mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-vaccine-locations-for-individuals-currently-eligible-to-be-vaccinated#find-a-locations-for-individuals-currently-eligible-to-be-vaccinated).

COVID-19 administration and an initial lack of cooperation from the state. Upon hearing the news, the MDS immediately notified all dental providers in the state via email and website and social media postings, encouraging those members who are interested in receiving the vaccine to view the online map of locations providing vaccines to eligible individuals and schedule an appointment as soon as possible. (Note: As MDS CONNECTION was readying for publishing, the state was announcing more vaccine sites at a rapid pace. See the map at mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-vaccine-locations-for-individuals-currently-eligible-to-be-vaccinated#find-a-location-for-individuals-currently-eligible-to-be-vaccinated.) Following Governor Baker’s announcement, the MDS issued the following statement:

“Dental teams are primed to support both the Commonwealth’s and the Biden Administration’s goals of getting COVID-19 vaccinations into the arms of the public. But first, these health care professionals who make their livelihoods and working toward equitable access to oral health for all,” says MDS President Dr. MaryJane Hanlon. “I, along with the MDS Board of Trustees, have come to value his thoughtful approach and commitment to collaboration. Under his leadership, the MDS is well-positioned for the first years of our new governance structure—one that he helped develop. I am very excited to welcome Kevin into this role and am very much looking forward to working even more closely with him.”

“Kevin has proven time and again that he is passionate about advocating for our members and working toward equitable access to oral health for all,” says MDS President Dr. MaryJane Hanlon. “I, along with the MDS Board of Trustees, have come to value his thoughtful approach and commitment to collaboration. Under his leadership, the MDS is well-positioned for the first years of our new governance structure—one that he helped develop. I am very excited to welcome Kevin into this role and am very much looking forward to working even more closely with him.”

“After an extensive search in what was already a challenging year, Kevin stood out among the candidates as someone who could seamlessly transition into this leadership role for the MDS,” says Dr. David Lustbader, MDS Past President and Chair of the Executive Director Search Committee. “He has a profound understanding and appreciation for what our organization needs and has been contributing to the unparalleled leadership of the MDS and on behalf of its members throughout the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

The Massachusetts Dental Society Names Kevin Monteiro as Executive Director

A native of Peabody who currently resides in Jamaica Plain, Monteiro earned a Master of Business Administration degree from Babson College’s F.W. Olin Graduate School of Business and a bachelor’s degree from Northeastern University. He holds a Certified Association Executive (CAE) designation from the American Society of Association Executives. He has been active with the New England Society of Association Executives (NE/SAE), currently serving on the NE/SAE Board of Directors and Finance Committee and was previously co-chair of its Young Professionals Committee. He is also a board member of Portuguese Americans for Higher Education.

“I am honored to continue to serve the MDS in this new and exciting challenge,” says Monteiro. “I have truly enjoyed working with my talented colleagues over the years, supporting and advocating for our members, and working to ensure that everyone across the Commonwealth has access to oral health care. I am looking forward to this next step in my career and the opportunity to help propel our entire organization forward.”

Monteiro succeeds Dr. Robert Boose, CAE, who initially retired as the Society’s Executive Director in March 2020 after 18 years leading the organization and who returned to serve as Interim Executive Director after the sudden passing of his successor Conor McNulty, CAE, in early July.

“I am very proud and pleased that the MDS Board of Trustees appointed Kevin to lead the Society,” says Dr. Boose. “Kevin has a full understanding of the issues that we face. He was a key member of my management team, and I have enjoyed working with him and watching him grow professionally. I know he will do great things, and I will continue to support him, the staff, and the Board in my retirement.”

The MDS engaged Kittleman & Associates, a national executive search firm, in the second half of 2020 to conduct the Executive Director search.
Happy New Year!

Happy New Year to each one of you! I do hope that you and your loved ones enjoyed time together in whatever form that took over the holidays. Hopefully, when current MDS Vice President Dr. Meredith Bailey writes her Happy New Year message a year from now, we will have enjoyed a reunion with our loved ones like no other year before.

Your MDS Board of Trustees did not take much of a break over the holidays, as there were so many things to address. Our number-one care about since my last message to you in the November-December issue has been getting everyone on the dental team aligned so that we can be ready to launch our vaccine program as soon as the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) gives us the go-ahead.

I realize some of you were disappointed by the Vaccine Roundtable webinar we held on January 7 and felt that it didn’t provide any new information or the information you were expecting. Trust that it disappointed us as much as it did you to not be able to give you more information. Personally, I try very hard to see both sides of an issue, as that is what a true leader should do. Our frustration as providers is because we are much more organized than the state seems to be.

However, imagine the flipside of the story: Here you have a group of politicians with very little understanding of the world of dentistry outside of their six-month visit to the dentist. Add to that, we were not “invited” to the table when the DPH and Governor Baker’s office started the discussion of phasing the roll-out of vaccines. Why? Don’t they know that the teeth are a part of the body? This, my fellow colleagues, is the real issue. We have to continue to educate the general population, including legislators, that we ARE a part of medicine. We just specialize in teeth, just like cardiologists specialize in the heart—we aren’t separate. This separation started more than 200 years ago when the dean of a medical school called the field of dentistry “irrelevant to the training of prospective doctors,” characterizing the care of teeth as a “mechanical issue” rather than a medical issue. This has had a profound effect on our profession, and we must change that. Now is not the time, but rest assured, this is on my agenda to take forward as I transition out of my role as President to Immediate Past President on July 1. Given the overall impact that COVID-19 has had on our medical system, we owe it to our patients to make the stand and take our place in medicine, where we belong.

Again, I am hopeful that by the time this issue of the newsletter is published that we should have our vaccine distribution plan in place and the guidance we seek from the state on the “how, when, and where” determined for you and your entire dental team.

As the work of the Society continues every day regardless of whether we are in a pandemic or not, the Board of Trustees is very pleased to announce the appointment of our very own Kevin Monteiro to the role of Executive Director. Kevin has shown time and time again that his breadth of knowledge of and ability to traverse the complicated government systems in place is so beneficial to the future growth and management of the Society. Kevin assumed his new role on January 18, and we look forward to him and his team orchestrating his plan for the future of the MDS and the focus on membership, additional revenue streams, reinventing Yankee Dental Congress, and the profession. The Board is very pleased to support him and officially introduce him at the House of Delegates (HOD) on January 27.

Speaking of the HOD, the virtual meeting is planned to focus heavily on continuing to align our operational practices with our new governance restructuring. Dr. Bailey will give her acceptance speech and an outline of the programs and focus she has for her upcoming tenure.

Immediately following the HOD is Yankee 2021: Changing the Game! on January 28. Little did we know when we chose the title to this year’s Yankee how true this would be. This will be our first-ever virtual Yankee, and while we may have had reservations about it early on, MDS Managing Director of Business Development and Yankee Dental Congress Shannon McCarthy and her team have done an absolutely amazing job setting up a great program for everyone on the dental team to enjoy! Hopefully you and your team set aside time to enjoy the company of your colleagues as we get together virtually for the very first time. I have been fortunate enough to have been involved in many of the discussions of our first virtual Yankee event and we look forward to hosting you and your team, sharing great content, social gatherings, and promotion of our exhibitors.

As I write this in mid-January, I’m looking forward to “seeing” all of you online in a few short weeks. Please stay on top of your emails and ensure you answer the call if you would like to volunteer as part of the vaccine roll-out process. We will need each of you to take a role to provide increased efficiency and ensure the protection of our teams and our patients.

Best,
Dr. MJ Hanlon

Special Session of the House of Delegates to Be Held June 16, 2021

On January 20, 2021, the MDS Board of Trustees voted to hold a special session of the MDS House of Delegates to review and approve the proposed budget for the 2021-2022 MDS fiscal year as part of our new governance timelines. This special session of the MDS House will be Wednesday, June 16, 2021, at 6:00 pm and will be a virtual meeting.

If you are a delegate, please reserve this date in your calendar as part of your delegate duties. Information on the platform and any login link or instructions will be sent closer to the meeting. The House of Delegates Special Session is open for all members to observe via the MDS YouTube channel (youtube.com/massdental) but only members of the House are allowed to participate and only delegates having voting privileges.
within inches of patients’ mouths and potentially infectious aerosols must get vaccinated themselves. The Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) thanks the Baker Administration and public health officials for finally opening distribution of COVID-19 vaccines to all groups included in Phase 1 of the Commonwealth’s plan.

Since the early days of the pandemic, MDS members closed their offices to protect public health, used their highly trained skills to lighten the load on fellow health care professionals by keeping patients with dental emergencies away from the ER, implemented new safety measures and protocols to keep patients and communities safe, and continued to provide critical oral health services to people without contributing to community spread. Dental teams have expertise in infection control, prowess at providing injections, and locations in communities across the country that stand ready, willing, and able to help get help to the other side of the pandemic as well as support the president’s goal to get 100 million vaccines into arms in 100 days.”

The MDS acknowledges and shares in our members’ frustrations at this circuitous road to receiving the vaccine. We know that our members have demonstrated tremendous patience throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, including during the state’s vaccination roll out. However, not unlike other initiatives planned throughout the pandemic, there have been disruptions and unanticipated obstacles, many of them out of our control. Through it all, the MDS never stopped fighting for our members.

On December 1, 2020, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) finalized its recommendations on who would receive the first doses of the imminent COVID-19 vaccine. The ACIP recommended that health care personnel and residents of long-term care facilities be among the first groups offered the vaccine (cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs/vacc-specific/covid-19.html). These recommendations were passed on to all 50 states for each to determine the vaccination protocols and begin preparations for vaccine distribution, with the understanding that demand for the vaccine was expected to exceed supply during the first months of the national COVID-19 vaccination program. Governor Baker announced the state’s prioritized phased vaccination roll-out plan on December 9, 2020, with the Phase 1 estimated timeframe taking place December-February, Phase 2 from February-April, and Phase 3 (the general public) from April-June. Shortly thereafter, on December 11 and 18, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued emergency use authorizations for the administration of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines, respectively.

While dentists and other dental health care professionals were placed in Phase 1 of the state’s plan as “health care workers doing non-COVID-facing care,” the state slated them at the end of the phase (see mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-vaccine-distribution-timeline-phase-overview#phase-1). This led to much frustration for dental professionals across the state. In mid-December, the MDS immediately set out to find answers to members’ frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the COVID-19 vaccine. These vaccine FAQs are available on the MDS’s dedicated vaccine webpage (massdental.org/vaccine-information), which is updated as new information is made available. The FAQ answers questions such as:

- Where do dental professionals fit in the priority order?
- Who is included in the dental professional category?
- Can a dental practice mandate that employees get vaccinated?

When the prospect of a viable COVID-19 vaccine was first announced, the MDS began lobbying and exploring every avenue for dental professionals to receive the vaccine as soon as possible, but the truth is that the state maintains final authority and despite our continued outreach and advocacy efforts, state officials were not forthcoming with timeline or distribution plans. Specifically, on December 29, MDS President Dr. Mary Jane Hanlon sent a letter to Governor Baker on behalf of MDS members asking for additional information on the timeline and distribution process for vaccines for dental professionals, citing frustration with the lack of information available on the distribution plans for the vaccine for dental professionals.

“When we appreciate that dental providers are included in Phase 1, and that two dentists serve on the state’s Provider Advisory Committee, the state has not been forthcoming with additional details regarding when and where the dental team will receive the vaccine,” she said. “Dental professionals have continued to treat their patients throughout the pandemic and remain at high risk for contracting COVID-19 due to the nature of our work.” (Read the letter at massdental.org/vaccine-information.) Dr. Hanlon requested a definitive answer on when dental professionals will be able to receive the vaccine and where they will be administered.

The MDS did not slow down while waiting to hear back from the state, and on January 7, we held a webinar on the status of the COVID-19 vaccine. Hosted by the MDS Membership Committee, the roundtable discussion provided a current assessment of the state’s vaccine roll-out plans for dental professionals with panelists—including Dr. Hanlon—fielding member questions. You can view the webinar in its entirety at https://www.youtube.com/massdentalsociety.

Throughout the first half of January, the MDS and its members continued to express their frustration in waiting for the COVID-19 vaccine. Dr. Hanlon spoke to the Boston Herald, WCVB-TV, and Channel 7 news, and several members were interviewed by local news outlets—including WWLP-22News, Boston 25 News, WBZ-TV, and Spectrum News 1 Worcester—about being added to the state’s pool of COVID-19 vaccinators. But to be able to do that, they first needed to receive the vaccine themselves. “It’s frustrating not having the communication from the state,” said Dr. Frank Michitti, a general dentist practicing in Feeding Hills. “It’s also frustrating seeing neighboring states have their dentists vaccinated.”

Following the MDS’s lead, Dennis Leonard, chief executive officer of Delta Dental of Massachusetts (DDMA), also sent a letter to Governor Baker urging him to move dental professionals up in the COVID-19 vaccine priority list and provide more clarity as to the timeline and distribution plans. Several news outlets reported on the letter and asked Dr. Hanlon to weigh in on the subject. Dr. Hanlon reiterated the MDS’s stance that it is safe to go to the dentist, adding “but if you look at what we do, no one is as close to the mouth and the nose as we are.”

On January 13, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) informed the MDS that it wanted to partner with us for the Commonwealth’s roll-out efforts to provide COVID-19 vaccinations to dental professionals. In an email communication to all members, Dr. Hanlon said: “This is a major positive development, as the MDS has worked relentlessly to advocate for and lobby on behalf of dental professionals to receive vaccinations and up to this point, the state has not been forthcoming with related information, causing great frustration for us all. This partnership is the result of the very hard work and efforts of your MDS leaders and is a big step forward in ensuring that dental professionals have access to the COVID-19 vaccination as soon as possible.”

To speed up the process, the MDS swiftly created an online survey to gather data on the anticipated number of dental professionals seeking the COVID-19 vaccine to help the DPH in the distribution planning process. The survey was emailed to all dentists (members and non-members) in the state, requesting that it be completed by all members of the dental team—those who wish to be vaccinated and those who do not wish to receive the vaccine—so that we would be able to inform the DPH on how many vaccines would be needed. More than 3,850 responses were received, with a whopping 88% indicating they wanted the vaccine. The MDS also contacted hospitals across the state to establish partnerships for vaccine administration to dental professionals, notifying District members of those opportunities.

Dental professionals have played a pivotal role in keeping patients healthy and safe throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite vigorous and increased infection control protocols, dentists and their staff are vulnerable to exposure to the COVID-19 virus as they are under continual threat of contracting the virus given the high risk of exposure to aerosols, so it’s critical that the state make vaccines available to these health care providers as soon as possible.

The MDS and DPH were still ironing out the details on the partnership and the next steps when Governor Baker made his sudden January 21 announcement. The MDS will continue to communicate updates on the vaccine distribution to members. Please be sure to open and read your MDS emails and check the MDS COVID-19 vaccine webpage (massdental.org/vaccine-information). Ensure that you receive all MDS email updates by adding us to your email provider’s “safe sender” list, also known as “whitelisting.” Alternatively, you should also be able to whitelist the MDS domain “@email.massdental.org.” Learn more at massdental.org/Site-Tips. Rest assured that the MDS will continue to do our best to keep you updated and informed.
Come together and collaborate with your colleagues at this jam-packed day filled with fun, learning, and excitement.

- Engage and network with close to 100 exhibitors
- Learn with your peers from industry visionaries at top-notch continuing education courses
- Enjoy a drink or have some lunch from one of the food trucks
- Play a game and reconnect with your friends
Introducing the Yankee Study Club, a powerful and intimate digital learning experience that reimagines the way dental professionals Connect, Grow, and Thrive in today’s new dental landscape! Each module will contain five virtual sessions of clinical, evidence-based programs developed by professionals within each discipline. Attendees will also have access to the speakers to ask questions and share cases (following HIPAA guidance) throughout the module.

**Module 1 – Dos and Don'ts of Dentistry**
Each session will cover what went wrong and why; confessions and truths; and consequences and decisions.

**Session Topics:**
- Trauma Management of Primary and Permanent Teeth
- Extraction and Grafting
- Bulk vs. Incremental Curing Composites
- How Digital Should We Go?
- Comprehensive Treatment Plan—Pulling It All Together

Attendees will be learning from trusted sources and thought leaders from the Boston dental schools, including: Drs. Timothy Hempton, Gerard Kugel, Carl McManama, Maritza Morell, and Ancy Verdier.

**Module 1 Pricing**
- ADA Member: $199
- Non-Member: $299
- New Dentist: $99 (10 years and under)
- Auxiliary Staff: $99
- Students: FREE

Attend all five sessions, and receive 5 CE credits.
Participants that attend all sessions of Module 1 will earn a certificate of accomplishment and be eligible to participate in Module 2 (Fall 2021), which will be more advanced and include the option of hands-on components.

Registration opens on February 4, 2021.

yankeedental.com/study-club
Dental Hygienist Licensure Reminder: Deadline Extended

All dental hygienists are required by the Board of Registration in Dentistry (BORID) to be licensed to practice in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. For licensure, a dental hygienist must complete a minimum of 20 CEUs per two-year renewal cycle, which runs from April 1 to March 31 of odd years (e.g., April 1, 2019, to March 31, 2021), that must include courses in infection control in the dental health care setting and certification in CPR/AED or BLS. The courses must meet BORID standards (see article on page 7 for information on self-instruction CE) and must be fulfilled during the 24 months immediately preceding the March 31 renewal date in odd-numbered years; the current renewal cycle for dental hygienist licenses in Massachusetts ends on March 31, 2021.

Dental hygienist licenses are still scheduled to expire at midnight on March 31, but the March 2020 order from Governor Baker that extended the expiration date of all professional licenses scheduled to expire during the state of emergency has been extended to June 30, 2021. Continuing education credits still need to be completed before license renewal, but dental hygienists who have yet to do so will have an extra three months to renew their licenses and local anesthesia permits without any penalty.

Hygienists can renew their licenses at mass.gov/dental-hygienist-licenses. For more information on BORID rules and regulations, visit massdental.org/regs.

Question: Can I Charge a PPE Fee?

Answer:

Yes, but you will want to be sure you are in the know on how to handle this situation to minimize misunderstandings in your office. If your practice is utilizing personal protective equipment (PPE) fee code D1999 or charging a PPE fee to your patients, you must notify each patient of this new charge in advance of the appointment. It is recommended that the patient receive this notification at the time of scheduling the appointment, but if the appointment is already scheduled, then the patient should be notified prior to arriving to the dental appointment. This ensures the patient is not surprised by the additional charge. Additionally, the MDS recommends that providers review your provider network contracts before implementing a PPE fee. Many insurance companies do not allow participating dentists to use the D1999 code and provider network contracts typically disallow an additional infection control or PPE fee.

Need CPR CE? Plan Ahead

The MDS Dental Practice and Benefits Committee wants to remind all licensed dental professionals that the requirements to complete Basic Life Support (BLS) and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) certification have not changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each licensee and licensure applicant must still obtain and then maintain certification in BLS for Healthcare Providers or CPR/AED for the Professional Rescuer achieved through the successful completion of a certification course that includes a live, hands-on skills assessment by a certified instructor.

However, finding in-person programs will be more challenging this year due to COVID-19 and in-person capacity limits, which can change at any time. Be sure to allow yourself enough time to fulfill this licensure requirement. Dental hygienist licenses renew by March 31, 2021, (see article above) so you will want to make sure your dental hygienist has completed this requirement.

What should you do if you need to take one of these courses? The Committee recommends that licensure applicants and licensees check with the American Heart Association (heart.org) and the American Red Cross (redcross.org) for acceptable certification courses in your area. Schedule your training with ample time in advance of your license renewal in the event that it gets canceled or if space requirements change. If you have some time before your renewal date rolls around (dentists have until March 31, 2022, to fulfill their license requirements), then the MDS’s DentalPaloza on June 4, 2021—an outdoor event at the Lawn on D in Boston—is a good option as multiple offerings are planned, but keep in mind that there may still be capacity restrictions in place. See yankeedental.com/dentalpaloza for more information.

Our best advice to you in these unsettled times is to plan ahead so you have no issues fulfilling this requirement.

The MDS Dental Practice and Benefits Committee emails Dental Practice Insights, a monthly tip that members can immediately incorporate into their practices. If you’ve missed any of the emails, all Dental Practice Insights are archived at massdental.org/insights. Have a tip to share? Send it to membership@massdental.org.
What You Need to Know About Self-Instruction CE

One small silver lining of 2020 was getting the opportunity to spend time learning in a virtual setting. The MDS wants you to be sure you are informed on the difference between online education offerings. Massachusetts 234 CMR regulations allow licensed dental professionals to fulfill their full requirement of education credits online (with the exception of CPR) provided the program is live and offers an opportunity to ask questions of the speaker. You may also receive CE credits for recorded programs (i.e., self-instruction) that require passing a test, but you may only take 50% of your required CE credits in this manner.

According to the regulations, self-instruction courses are allowed in that “a dentist may earn a maximum of 20 CEUs, a dental hygienist may earn a maximum of 10 CEUs, and a dental assistant may earn a maximum of 6 CEUs per renewal cycle by the completion of an individual study course [home study, online, correspondence, audio, or video].” Such courses must conform to the standards for providers of continuing education specified in 234 CMR 8.04 and include a test that the licensee must pass to obtain credit.

The MDS recommends that you take the time to note on your course certificate whether the program you completed was live or self-instruction to avoid any confusion at the end of your license renewal cycle.

Massachusetts Prescription Awareness Tool Update

By David Keith, DMD, BDS

Dr. Keith is a visiting oral and maxillofacial surgeon at Massachusetts General Hospital and professor of oral and maxillofacial surgery at the Harvard School of Dental Medicine.

The Massachusetts Prescription Awareness Tool (MassPAT) is the prescription drug monitoring program administered by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (mass.gov/guides/ma...). It is a computer-based system that collects controlled substance prescription data submitted by pharmacies in the state and those that deliver controlled substances to the state. In Massachusetts, controlled substances include all opioids (e.g., hydrocodone [Vicodin, Lorcet], oxycodone [Percoct, Percodan], codeine, and Tylenol with codeine, etc.) and benzodiazepines (e.g., diazepam [Valium], cloridiazepoxide [Librium]), gabapentin (Neurontin), and tramadol (Ultram). The use of this database has been mandated since 2016 and prescribers are required to check the information for each patient for whom they are planning to prescribe any of the listed controlled substances. This data can help prevent substance misuse and lead to safer and more appropriate prescribing of controlled substances.

Effective January 1, 2021, prescriptions are now required to be written electronically in Massachusetts to help avoid altered prescriptions and other misuse. (Learn more at mass.gov/lists/eprescribing.) Earlier this year, the MassPAT system was revised and now provides prescribers with additional features and information. The original intent remains the same—namely, to detect doctor shopping, overlapping or duplicated prescriptions, and unlawful prescribing, etc. The data provided has previously been reviewed and this communication will serve to update MDS members on the additional features available.

The basic data remains the same. The patient’s name, date of birth, gender, and address is provided. The total number of controlled substance prescriptions filled, prescribers, and pharmacies are documented in tabular form and contact information is provided. The Visano enhancement shows this data in graphic form, with narcotics highlighted in red and sedatives in blue, allowing a pictorial representation that makes it easier to track overlapping and duplicate prescriptions over time. In addition, the Mean Morphine Equivalent (MME) is tracked in a bar graph, as is the Lorazepam Milligram Equivalent. The MME is a measure of the strength of the opioid prescription. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises that an MME above 50 is a high dose and requires risk to be addressed. An MME above 90 is associated with a nine-fold increase in overdose risk. A dose of oxycodone or hydrocodone for a post-operative dental procedure would be an MME of 50 or below. A new feature is Risk Indicators, which alert the prescriber to potential risk factors. A patient who has had five opioid or sedative providers in any of the last two years is flagged, as are any patients who have filled prescriptions for four opioid or sedatives at a pharmacy in any 90-day period in the last two years. This information does not, in and of itself, indicate substance misuse, but it can help detect potential misuse issues.

Two other enhancements are of value. A list of printable CDC pamphlets on chronic pain, opioid risks, dosing, tapering, opioids and pregnancy, safe storage and disposal, and more are available for office use and distribution to patients. For those patients who may need referral to a substance use professional, there is a list of available resources by zip code. While this is a useful resource, a personal knowledge of local psychologists, substance use specialists, and treatment centers is preferable.

These modifications have made the MassPAT data easier to use and more valuable to the prescribing clinician. It should be noted that prescription data is only one of many tools that the prescriber can use to monitor substance use and potential for misuse. A recent issue of Dental Clinics of North America titled “Controlled Substance Mitigation in the Dental Setting” contains 10 chapters on various topics, including: assessing and managing controlled substance risk; patient interviewing techniques; screening resources; managing acute dental pain; co-morbid conditions; assessment and management of dental patients with active substance use disorder; interprofessional collaboration; special high-risk populations; and medicolegal issues. These resources can help the prescribing dentist understand the current opioid prescription crisis, assess substance misuse risk, monitor patients, and provide safe and effective pain control.

References

Member Savings Program

Contactless Payment Protects Your Patients and Your Staff

Merchant Lynx Services is a one-stop solution for dental practices and offers dentists merchant services, including numerous payment acceptance methods. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Merchant Lynx can help add another layer of protection and safety for your staff and patients. The MDS Member Savings Program partner is ready to assist your practice in taking Apple Pay, Samsung Pay, and all other contactless payment options. Merchant Lynx offers:

- Contactless payment terminals: Includes everything from the latest wireless terminals to contactless pin pads
- E-commerce: Accept payments through your website—Merchant Lynx’s IT team will help add payment options on your current site
- Payment links: Email or text payment links with invoicing

What's more, Merchant Lynx's Cash Discount Program allows MDS members to cut the costs of credit card acceptance by up to 80%. Learn more at massdental.org/Merchant-Lynx-Services.

Henry Schein Offers Practice Analysis

As part of MDS Member Savings Program partner Henry Schein's commitment to the communities it serves, it is working to help improve health care services and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, the company has taken steps to provide the Henry Schein Practice Analysis to help dental practices assess their business situation and identify opportunities to aid in their business rebound needs in the wake of the virus. Uncover additional production growth opportunities for your practice with the Henry Schein Practice Analysis solution.

In addition, MDS members also have access to discounts on 15,000 of the most commonly used dental merchandise items and X-ray calibrations, as well as exclusive promotions that run quarterly on Henry Schein private label products, gloves, and more. New MDS member customers also receive 10% off their first Connections order as a new member of the Henry Schein Preferred Pricing program. Learn more about the Henry Schein Practice Analysis and the Henry Schein Preferred Pricing Program at massdental.org/Henry-Schein.

PureLife Waste Compliance and COVID-19 Essentials

PureLife is a full-line dental supplier that also provides affordable, total compliance solutions, from sharps waste to infection control services, education, training, and support. Throughout COVID-19, PureLife has played a crucial role providing essential personal protective equipment (PPE) and continues to be among the most reliable sources of protection for the dental community. As the supply chain for masks and other PPE continues to slowly improve, dentists can count on PureLife to pass lower costs directly to them.

Unfortunately, a global glove shortage still poses serious challenges, with prices skyrocketing as a result. PureLife is responding by prioritizing dentists and providing transparency, reliability, and fair market prices. MDS members can order directly from PureLife and receive:

- A 10% discount on all waste disposal solutions
- Access to a dedicated support line to answer compliance-related questions
- A complimentary online compliance portal that dramatically simplifies all administrative tasks, such as recycling certificate issuance and order tracking, and offers other tools such as quick reorder from history

What are you waiting for? Learn more and sign up now at massdental.org/ carecredit.

Show your Patients You Care with CareCredit

CareCredit offers MDS members ongoing financial resources, reduced expenses, and less stress and time associated with collecting accounts receivables. With so many Americans affected by the economic fallout of the pandemic, now more than ever your patients may appreciate being able to pay over time with special financing. CareCredit can help you help them.

CareCredit is the nation’s leading patient financing program, with more than 8 million patients using CareCredit and 80,000 dental practices offering patients the convenience of its monthly payment plans. And as an MDS member, you have access to these benefits without the need to reapply. MDS members also pay less for enrollment and have no monthly minimum-use fee.

What are you waiting for? Learn more and sign up now at massdental.org/ carecredit.
Bank of America Startup Financing

Starting a practice in 2021

Since 1996, Bank of America Practice Solutions has helped dentists across the nation reach their goals through smart financial solutions and helpful guidance. Whether dentists are starting a practice or expanding to new horizons, customized financial products are available to help turn their dreams into reality.

Starting a practice is one of the greatest accomplishments in a dentist’s career, but it can also be one of the most challenging. As with any new business, these challenges come early, particularly with securing a loan, staffing and building a strong marketing plan to fill the operatories. Conquering these obstacles becomes far more manageable with an experienced lender.

The unique Start-up financing offered by Bank of America is an all-inclusive package, including:

- Flexible rates and flexible terms
- Optional rate lock to protect against interest rate changes
- Interest-only and graduated payment options to give ample time to grow without cash flow restrictions

As a national lender, Bank of America not only offers a strong lending solution for new startup practices but also complements the loan with turn-key business solutions such as merchant services, easy check deposits, business checking and online banking. Working with a lender that offers a full suite of products to help fulfill a dentist’s banking needs from top to bottom can be helpful when transitioning to practice ownership.

Bank of America focuses on three phases of starting a new practice:

Phase one is obtaining loan approval with the ability to lock in the borrower’s interest rate for up to 4 months, while finalizing leasehold or real estate space.

Phase two happens post lease signing, during the construction period. During this time, borrowers can make payments daily to vendors for construction, equipment, and marketing for up to 10-months of the project period, guarding against any potential construction delays.

Phase three occurs once the practice opens for business. New practice owners benefit from Bank of America’s complimentary Practice Heartbeat program; to help you develop the management, analytic and competitive skills crucial to practice ownership.

To learn more about practice startup loans and current promotional rates available through Bank of America, visit bankofamerica.com/practicesolutions or call 800.497.6076.
Benefits of Your Membership

Last year was a challenging year for dental practices, and the MDS hopes that members appreciated their membership in organized dentistry during such a tumultuous time. The MDS, the American Dental Association (ADA), and your District Dental Societies all did, and continue to do, our utmost to assist members as these uncertain times persist. During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, member benefits included:

- Daily communications to support the needs of your dental practice
- Distribution of personal protective equipment supplies from the MDS and the ADA
- Support from the MDS Foundation COVID-19 Recovery Fund program (valued at $1,250 per participant)
- Guidance on COVID-19 requirements
- Timely and pertinent webinars
- Responses to thousands of phone calls
- District outreach

As we move into 2021, we hope that the pandemic will soon be behind us. The MDS wants to continue to be the source dentists can rely on to help them move forward and transition to the “new normal.” That's why it's critical now more than ever that you renew your membership. If you have not had a chance to renew, please do so today to ensure that you can continue to access the critical resources provided by the MDS.

Renew your membership to maintain indispensable MDS member benefits:

- Important updates on regulations and advocacy
- Informational webinars on timely topics
- Reduced registration fees and specials at the Yankee Dental Congress
- Voluntary dispute resolution through Peer Review
- Access to the Member Assistance Center where you can get all of your questions answered
- Opportunities to save time and money through our Member Savings Program
- Award-winning publications, including the Journal of the Massachusetts Dental Society
- And much more

To renew online, log in to your account at massdental.org and select “Renew My Membership” at the top of your profile page. If you have any trouble logging in, select “forgot your password?” and enter your email to reset your password.

If you prefer to renew by phone, call 800.342.8747 and select option 6.

If you have any questions, please call the Member Assistance Center at 800.342.8747 or email membership@massdental.org. We appreciate your membership and look forward to continuing to serve you.

Free MDS Membership for Your Staff

Were you aware that your MDS membership includes complimentary membership for your support staff? If you haven’t taken advantage of this member benefit already, encourage your staff to enroll today so they can share the perks of membership, including important updates, continuing education, discounted programs, and more.

To sign up for MDS membership, each member of your support staff who wishes to do so must complete an application individually at massdental.org/join. Make sure that they know to choose “Allied Dental Health Professional (ADHP)” as their member type.

Looking for MDS News?
Check the New Online Newsroom

The MDS recently launched an online Newsroom where you can find recent articles, announcements, and media coverage of the MDS and our members. This page is available to members, as well as members of the media, legislation, and the general public. Visit massdental.org/newsroom to see for yourself!

If you’re looking for an article you saw in one of our weekly eNews emails, check the MDS homepage Featured News section at massdental.org or the Previously Featured News webpage at massdental.org/Member-Resources/Previously-Featured-News.

The MDS Health & Wellness Committee Launches Book Club

The MDS Health and Wellness Committee invites members to join its recently launched MDS Book Club! Turn off the TV, put down the phone, dust off your reading glasses, and pick up a good book. Monthly meetings are held via Zoom to discuss that month’s book and allow some socializing with colleagues. The first MDS Book Club met on January 14 to discuss American Dirt by Jeanine Cummins. The Book Club will be meeting again on Thursday, April 1, at 7 pm, to discuss A Man Called Ove: A Novel, by Fredrik Backman. To sign up for the meeting or to learn more about the Book Club, visit massdental.org/wellbeing.
Advocacy

MDS Filings for Current Legislative Session

For the legislative session that began on January 6, 2021, the Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) intends to file legislation on assignment of benefits and medical loss ratio reporting.

Increasing Patients’ Choice of Dental Providers
An Act Relative to Increasing Patient Choice Through Assignment of Benefits

The MDS believes that all Massachusetts residents should have access to quality oral health care, and that they should be able to choose the dental provider that’s best for them.

Requesting Dental Benefits Transparency
An Act Relative to Medical Loss Ratio Reporting for Dental Benefits Corporations

The MDS seeks to ensure that dental benefits companies are transparent and accountable.

For more information, email advocacy@massdental.org.

Save the Date for Beacon Hill Day: April 14, 2021

Beacon Hill Day is a key part of the Society’s advocacy strategy, as dentists and dental students come together to meet with lawmakers and speak with one voice on behalf of the dental profession and patients. While the 2020 Beacon Hill Day was canceled due to COVID-19 closures and public health guidance, the MDS will host a virtual day of advocacy this year.

The MDS looks forward to resuming Beacon Hill Day on April 14, 2021, so please mark your calendars and plan to join us. For more information, email advocacy@massdental.org.

WHAT IS THE MDS-PAC?

The MDS-PAC is the political action committee of the Massachusetts Dental Society. The MDS-PAC seeks to create a favorable political environment by supporting pro-dentistry candidates and facilitating the political involvement of MDS members.

HOW DOES THE MDS-PAC HELP ME?

The MDS-PAC is an integral component in ensuring that a pro-dentistry legislative agenda is advanced on Beacon Hill.

To contribute, visit massdental.org/pac.
The New Year began with a glimmer of hope after a year of darkness. The arrival of COVID-19 vaccines indicates a light at the end of the tunnel, even though there remains a long path to that light. There is reason for optimism and determination as we work collectively to ensure the future of dentistry and the patients we serve in 2021. As your First District Trustee, I would like to share with you some of the issues that will undoubtedly play a role in the coming year.

First Period
Arguably, the most immediate issue we face as we enter 2021 is the effort to vaccinate dentists and dental professionals. I have heard from many dental leaders here in New England and around the country; some have gained access to the vaccine, while others have not. As you know, the ADA has issued a national statement urging that all dental professionals—because of the high-risk nature of dentistry—be included in the first wave of vaccinations. Nevertheless, each state has rolled out its vaccination plan based on its own conditions, infrastructure, and vaccine supplies. As your Trustee, I am working with the ADA and state component Societies to ensure the flow of science-based information for state leaders on the importance of dental professional vaccinations.

As we await the availability of vaccines for every dental professional in New England, however, it is important to remain committed to the infection control and personal protective equipment (PPE) guidelines we have been following. Whether you have been vaccinated or not, the virus continues to surge. These protocols have, to date, prevented dental office outbreaks in the United States. It is likely that they will remain relevant even after this critical phase in the pandemic comes to a close.

Second Period
While divisive and disturbing events in Washington, DC, have dominated the media, it is important to note that positive developments have also occurred over the last few weeks. For example, on January 15, President Trump signed into law the Competitive Health Insurance Reform Act. This new law, one of the ADA’s top legislative priorities for many years, represents a major victory for organized dentistry and consumers alike. The new law is aimed at improving transparency and competition in the health, dental, and vision insurance markets. It should also open up opportunities for long-term innovation and other improved features that will benefit consumers and providers by expanding choices for offering better and more coverage options. I applaud the effort of everyone who helped make this victory possible, particularly the dedicated ADA team in Washington!

I must also note that the president signed into law another economic stimulus bill that includes new funding and supplemental PPP loans that will help small businesses—like dental offices—continue their recovery. Additionally, the bill funds EIDL loan programs that will help alleviate PPP debt. Each of these provisions will help us, as business owners, continue to provide patient care in a challenging economic climate.

Third Period
One of the most critical elements of this pandemic is communication. It has appeared in many forms—emails, white papers, web conferences, and social media, among other methods—and has played a central role in the spring moratorium and reopening, the summertime financial recovery effort, and, most recently, the vaccine distribution. In most cases, communications within the Tripartite system were streamlined and fact-based. Then again, some communications during this period—particularly social media posts—are less based in fact and more rooted in emotion and hearsay (what a colleague of mine calls “the I heards”).

As we continue along the critical phases of vaccination and financial recovery, it is important for us, as members of the Tripartite, to look to and utilize the communications systems of the ADA and our state Societies. At the ADA, for example, information that is posted and disseminated is thoroughly vetted through multiple departments to ensure that it is rooted in fact and carefully articulated to avoid misinterpretation. State Societies also follow this procedure, utilizing Committees, Task Forces, and their respective Boards.

The Hippocratic Oath, to which we as dentists commit, reminds us to perform our art in such a way that benefits our patients. It also directs us to live our lives similarly. Embracing responsible communication that does not inflict damage is not disparate to the Hippocratic Oath and avoids doing harm to the public we serve.

As always, it is a great honor to serve as your Trustee!

Clinical Resource at Your Fingertips

The American Dental Association (ADA) and Elsevier, publisher of the Journal of the American Dental Association, have joined forces to give dental professionals access to free, cross-disciplinary, peer-reviewed research curated by a board of renowned experts. The PracticeUpdate Clinical Dentistry channel is a one-stop website for expert-curated updates from journals, news, and educational resources to help you stay current on clinical advances.

With PracticeUpdate Clinical Dentistry, you can easily access:

- New journal articles with quick-to-read abstracts and take-home messages
- The latest news and commentaries from key opinion leaders
- The latest research and studies on COVID-19
- Access to information on 20 other medical channels to stay current on conditions that can impact patient health
- The ability to choose your areas of interest to receive regular emails, customized with the latest research of interest to you
- The information you need to improve the oral and systemic health of your patients
- Free registration for you and your dental team.

Visit practiceupdate.com/explore/channel/clinical-dentistry/sp23 to learn more.
Seeking General Dentists and Specialists to join this multispecialty practice specializing in implant and cosmetic dentistry. We have 15 offices throughout Connecticut. Must be a responsible team player with excellent communication skills and chairside manners. FT and PT. Please email CV and cover letter for consideration to abbas.mohammadi@columbiadental.com.

General Dentist Wanted—Maynard, We are looking for a caring, driven, and confident general dentist to join our Maynard practice full-time. The practice has a long track record of success as a private practice and a loyal patient base in place. Enjoy the benefits of a strong operational team to help support the practice while you focus on the clinical care with complete autonomy. With experienced staff in place, this is truly a plug-and-play situation. In addition to a strong compensation and benefits package, this position also includes payment for CE opportunities. Contact Colleen Bikler at cbikler@midwest-dental.com.

ASSOCIATE GENERAL DENTIST—West Hartford, CT. Full-time associate role available with our affiliated Premier Dental practice in West Hartford, CT. Must be able to work two Saturdays a month. Great earnings, CE, and full benefits! Email resume to bames@dentalcareallince.com or learn more and apply online at www.dccareers.com.

Dr. Dental is Hiring! Or Dental is experiencing very strong patient demand and we are continuing to grow across our 20 Massachusetts-based practice locations. We are currently looking to add full-time general dentists and orthodontists to our Dr. Dental family. Enjoy: clinical autonomy; full schedules; competitive compensation including sign-on bonuses; 401(k) retirement plan; CE allowances; and much more. Interested candidates, please email your resume to Peter at peter@mydental.com to schedule a confidential introduction call.

Experienced General Dentist Looking for Practice Transition/Acquisition. The past year has changed everything, including for myself. If you are interested in growing your practice, transitioning out of practice, retiring outright, or looking to cut back with an invested partner, please contact me to discuss how I may help your vision. I am a general dentist with seven-plus years of experience (including GPR) looking to begin the next phase of my dental career. I have experience with many digital technologies, CAD/CAM systems, and sleep apnea implementation. If you are located within 20 miles of Boston or Framingham, please contact me to discuss how I can assist you with your plans. Thanks! Please contact dentisestreekingtransition@gmail.com.

PRACTICES FOR SALE OR RENT

Boston Area Practice for Rent: In desirable neighborhood close to Red Line on main street. Standalone building with excellent visibility. Perfect for group practice looking to expand. Doctor will stay for at least two years as associate. Also good for single doc with expanded skills including implants. Gross $620K last five years without implants, period, oral surgery, ortho, or pedo. Email advertising@massdental.org and put MDS Box 1507 in the subject line.

Dental Office Space for Rent in Newton Centre. Modern dental office space for rent in Newton Centre. Three private operatories. Parking. Rental per day up to three days a week. Ideal for a start up to see if Newton is the right location for your new practice. Contact newtorental@hksud.com.

Western MA General Practice for Sale: Busy and attractive practice in the Berkshires for sale. Six operatories with expansion opportunity for a seventh operatory. Real estate for sale. Collections of $1.6M and adjusted EBITDA of $278K. Over 1,700 active patients and 15 new patients per month. Please contact Kaile Vierstra with Professional Transition Strategies at kaile@professionaltransition.com or 719.684.6320.

ICONIC PRACTICE NORTH OF BOSTON: Reopening general practice, seeking high-quality person or partner to practice with established dentist who will be working a definite reduced schedule. Office has four to five operators. Great location. Returning to a full practice is not my agenda, so I will provide the incoming the opportunity seldom seen. Minimal investment required. Please contact by text at 978.337.7883.

SEEKING PRACTICES

General Dentist Associate: Busy, family dental practice is looking for a motivated, caring general dentist to join our practice in the beautiful Berkshires of Massachusetts. Our two locations, with one office transitioning to a brand-new facility, maintain modern technology with an enthusiastic dental team that is dedicated to quality care. Full-time position, excellent benefit package with the possibility of a future partnership. Please contact our office at info@berkshiredentistry.com.

Job Opportunities Available

General Dentist: Fantastic opportunity to join a well-established practice located in Franklin County. Practice averages more than 60 new patients per month. Well-trained long-term staff. Family-friendly community. Guaranteed $1,200 daily draw pay, lodging, Monday–Friday schedule. Salary $192,000 to $300,000 per year. Please email advertising@massdental.org and put MDS Box 1505 in the subject line.

General Dentist—Multispecialty family dental office in Londonderry, NH, is seeking a part- or full-time dental associate to start immediately. No weekends. We have a great staff, seven operatories, a state-of-the-art facility that includes paperless charts, 3D imaging, microscope technology, and more. Strict guidelines and PPE in place in light of COVID-19. Most insurances accepted. No Medicaid/Medicare. Compensation is based on commission. Benefits available. Please contact weidmd09@gmail.com.

Small Dental Equipment for Sale: Tuttnauer Valueclave sterilizer, Sprint Velpeau X-ray developer, Medronic Lifepak defibrillator, Parkell Clean machine ultrasonic scaler with inserts. Lead apron and various hand instruments, small ultrasonic cleaner for jewelry or hand instruments. Contact 413.204.4001.

Job Opportunities Available

General Dentist: Well-established practice in Franklin County. Practice averages more than 60 new patients per month. Well-trained long-term staff. Family-friendly community. Guaranteed $1,200 daily draw pay, lodging, Monday–Friday schedule. Salary $192,000 to $300,000 per year. Please email advertising@massdental.org and put MDS Box 1507 in the subject line.

General Dentist Wanted—Maynard. We are looking for a caring, driven, and confident general dentist to join our Maynard practice full-time. The practice has a long track record of success as a private practice and a loyal patient base in place. Enjoy the benefits of a strong operational team to help support the practice while you focus on the clinical care with complete autonomy. With experienced staff in place, this is truly a plug-and-play situation. In addition to a strong compensation and benefits package, this position also includes payment for CE opportunities. Contact Colleen Bikler at cbikler@midwest-dental.com.

Associate General Dentist—West Hartford, CT. Full-time associate role available with our affiliated Premier Dental practice in West Hartford, CT. Must be able to work two Saturdays a month. Great earnings, CE, and full benefits! Email resume to bames@dentalcareallince.com or learn more and apply online at www.dccareers.com.

Dr. Dental is Hiring! Or Dental is experiencing very strong patient demand and we are continuing to grow across our 20 Massachusetts-based practice locations. We are currently looking to add full-time general dentists and orthodontists to our Dr. Dental family. Enjoy: clinical autonomy; full schedules; competitive compensation including sign-on bonuses; 401(k) retirement plan; CE allowances; and much more. Interested candidates, please email your resume to Peter at peter@mydental.com to schedule a confidential introduction call.

General Dentist Associate: Busy, family dental practice is looking for a motivated, caring general dentist to join our practice in the beautiful Berkshires of Massachusetts. Our two locations, with one office transitioning to a brand-new facility, maintain modern technology with an enthusiastic dental team that is dedicated to quality care. Full-time position, excellent benefit package with the possibility of a future partnership. Please contact our office at info@berkshiredentistry.com.

Job Opportunities Wanted

Mass Dentist—Locum Tenens Office Coverage. Tufts graduate with 39 years of experience will provide coverage for emergencies, illness, vacation, family leave. Can do fill-in, PT, or temporary- or long-term. CV and references on request. Please call me at 508.642.7623 or email srocmth1@gmail.com.

PRACTICES FOR SALE OR RENT

Boston Area Practice for Sale: In desirable neighborhood close to Red Line on main street. Standalone building with excellent visibility. Perfect for group practice looking to expand. Doctor will stay for at least two years as associate. Also good for single doc with expanded skills including implants. Gross $620K last five years without implants, period, oral surgery, ortho, or pedo. Email advertising@massdental.org and put MDS Box 1507 in the subject line.

Dental Office Space for Rent in Newton Centre. Modern dental office space for rent in Newton Centre. Three private operatories. Parking. Rental per day up to three days a week. Ideal for a start up to see if Newton is the right location for your new practice. Contact newtorental@hksud.com.

The MDS Foundation Awards Grants to Oral Health Programs

The Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) Foundation has awarded a total of more than $66,000 in “Expanding Access to Dental Care” grants to five organizations in Massachusetts. The goal of the grants is to improve the oral health of residents of the Commonwealth by supporting sustainable programs that improve access to dental care.

The grant recipients include:

- The Cambridge Health Alliance — $15,000
- The Dental Lifeline Network Massachusetts Donated Dental Services (DDS) program — $6,250
- The Forsyth Institute in Cambridge, on behalf of the ForsythKids Program — $15,000
- The Tufts University School of Dental Medicine Service With A Smile Project — $15,000
- Volunteers in Medicine Berkshires in Great Barrington — $15,000

Visit massdental.org/grant-recipients to learn more about the Foundation’s grant recipients.