

Presidential Address to the 2020 House of Delegates
Dr. MaryJane Hanlon
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Former Presidents, Deans, members of the Board, members of the House of Delegates, students and guests, good afternoon. I would personally like to thank you for trusting me to represent you as the face of dentistry for the state of Massachusetts for the 2020-2021 year. I am humbled that you have put your faith in me. The responsibility to lead this organization, I will not take lightly. I will endeavor to represent each dentist in the Commonwealth with the utmost transparency and tenacity that I can muster.

One hundred fifty-six years ago, when 12 dentists decided to form an association to “share knowledge” and develop professional comradery, little did they know back then what the profession would look like today. Little did I know how much it was going to change in the 20-plus years since I graduated! But change happens whether we are prepared for it or not. How we react to that change and the challenges that are presented is what is critically important to remember. Our strength will always be in collaborating on common goals with a vision towards the future and creating that reality we envision.

So, what does our future look like? Well, based on what I saw this past weekend as five dental schools came together to collaborate and innovate a new dental school curriculum, all I can say is we are in good hands. Our three-year strategic plan will guide us based on the goals we have and the vision of the future we want to create. Currently, your Board members are focused on four goals:

1. Build the organization capacity, including financial resources.
2. Deliver exceptional value to support our members’ needs.
3. Create meaningful engagement opportunities.
4. Serve as the most trusted oral health advocate for the Commonwealth.

Looking out at all of you today, we have already accomplished so much on our organizational capacity goal. The need to be nimbler and more resilient in our structure and protect the financial resources we do have is apparent in the move of the House of Delegates to our Yankee meeting for the first time ever. Congratulations to the Governance Task Force led by Dr. Mina Paul and her team members for being able to collaboratively think through this process to get us to where we are today. We still have work to do, and we will get more done today as we address some changes that need to be made in our bylaws and operating manual.

Delivering value is critically important for all organizations to stay viable. Young dentists are seeking our guidance and counsel to help navigate the nearly constant changes and challenges that are happening across the dental landscape—including industry, academia, and the private practice models. While our forefathers were able to put a shingle in front of their home or office, today’s practices and how we practice is changing so rapidly it is hard to keep up. Add on top of that the added stress the financial impact of just going to dental school has on our young dentists—*BEFORE* even beginning their professional path—and it is easy to see why our younger dentists need our support.

For those of you who don't know much about me, I left the private practice I started after dental school about seven years ago to join the faculty at Tufts. I have been honored to return to my alma mater, and while there are days just like in private practice that are just crazy, for the most part, being with the young, future dentists and learning new technologies alongside them has reinvigorated my passion and deepened the love I have for this profession. Our students and residents are the future of this profession. As I judged the ADEA Hackathon at UConn this weekend, it was very apparent that we, as educators, are cultivating an innovative, committed group of young men and women who are equally as passionate about this profession as I know all of us are in this room.

There are many issues that are critically important to this new generation of dental professionals, not the least of which is paying back their student loans. For my tenure as President, I wholeheartedly want to provide support and continue the momentum to move these concerns forward to resolution for them as best I can.

Before we start discussing some of those concerns, I want to take you all back to dental school. I'm sure you all remember your first day of dental school, right? I remember my first day as if it was yesterday. I never told anyone in my family I was applying to dental school, as I was older and had a young daughter at home. I took the DATs, applied to the only two schools that I wanted to go to in Boston, and waited. I was fortunate enough not to have to wait long and found out right before Thanksgiving that I had been accepted. Now I had to tell my family! At Thanksgiving dinner, I waited for us all to be finished and I made the big announcement. The one person I was the most worried about was my dad. Of anyone, I thought he would be the most disappointed, as I knew I would be away from my daughter too much and felt that he would think that I should prioritize being a mom. Oh, was I wrong! His response to the news was extraordinary for the time. He turned to me, looked at me with the proudest look on his face, and said, "Well, it's about time! You've only been talking about becoming a dentist since you were a little girl!" That's when I knew, everything was going to be okay. My first day of dental school was my daughter's first day of kindergarten. We started our school journey together. While I look back on those four years as one of the most tiring and difficult of my life, I wouldn't change a thing. I'm sure all of you feel the same.

Now, I want you to fast forward those four years in your mind to when you were preparing for your boards to graduate. Back then, there were just the "NERBs," now the CDCA exam. We probably all remember that day even more so than our first day of school or our last at graduation! I was very fortunate that I had great patients and my exam went well. Not everyone is that fortunate. In fact, last week as I was at UNE as an examiner for CDCA, I watched as a well-prepared young dentist didn't manage his time well. He had sent in his Class 3 prep and was waiting for his patient to come back. I happened to be assigned to bring his patient back and, sure enough, there was an "Instruction to Candidate" form that was returned. I reviewed the form with the student and looked at the tooth prior to him making the changes he was instructed to make. His prep was absolutely perfect other than a small area of decalcification that he had to leave due to the criteria that the prep must be submitted in an ideal state. So, he made the changes, resubmitted the prep and then had to wait again. His patient returned sometime later, leaving him just 30 minutes to complete the restoration. In all our minds, we can do that quite

easily now that we have the experience. However, for the students in any of these exams, the drive to be perfect is so strong, that it makes it difficult to know when “good enough” is good enough. He submitted his finished restoration with 30 seconds to spare and failed because the contact wasn’t there. He was the only student out of 32 taking the exam that failed. He was devastated. So was I.

The case for the live-patient exam has run its course. Daily, within universities throughout the country, accredited dental schools are testing competency for our blossoming students and residents. That is why we are under rigorous guidelines every seven years and evaluated. This is where competency should be maintained, not with a testing agency. With artificial intelligence and Moog simulators, we can create scenarios that test whether a young dentist is prepared enough to go out into the public to practice. This is where our testing agencies should be heading. I ask you to support and join with me to stand with students across America who are stepping up and calling for the elimination of the live-patient exam. Many states have already been successful in doing so.

Before our house in Massachusetts is H.1992: An Act Relative to Dental Licensing Exams. The key points of this bill are to highlight the shortfalls of testing a student via a live patient interaction. These include:

1. It is too focused on a limited set of procedures that do not accurately reflect the multifaceted requirements and responsibilities demanded of dentists today in everyday practice.
2. It inadvertently discourages comprehensive care of the patient and can actually encourage improper care!
3. The process of obtaining a patient to sit for the exam is unduly burdensome on applicants.

We are fortunate to have three dental schools in the state of Massachusetts. All highly esteemed and regarded across the country. We are the ONLY state in the country where this happens, and each one of us is competing for patients to fulfill three portions of the exam: Class 2, Class 3 restorations, and periodontics. This is a need of 1,065 patients for approximately 355 providers. That is a lot of patients and a lot of stress on the student who must find them and the school who must feed them and provide free care. It is time for us to move to another form of testing for our future providers. My hope is that, during my tenure as your president, I will be able to move the needle to make that happen.

There are many other strategic objectives that support the goals of the Dental Society. As I move through my tenure, I will do my best to support all of them, but I will be heavily focused on any items that will help support our young professionals as they transition into our beloved profession. For those of us that were born in the '50s, '60s and '70s, they are not like us. They have different visions for what is important in their life. They do want better home-life balance, and many are not interested in owning a home or a car, never mind a practice! We must embrace these differences and support them where they are in the choices that they make for their lives. It is not a matter of good and bad. It is a matter of choice. They are entitled to that choice, just like we were. We must engage the DSOs and the type of practice they have created, as that is what

this generation is looking for. According to information out of the Health Policy Institute, 8.8 percent of all U.S. dentists were affiliated with a DSO in 2017. In 2015, it was 7.4 percent. This is not going to go away, as there are several advantages that this group appreciates when working at a DSO. In addition to being able to go home at the end of the day and play with their children, they want the flexibility to have other interests and move their family across the country when presented with the opportunity to do so.

Yesterday, I was fortunate enough to be able to attend a lecture at Tufts by Dr. Marko Vujicic entitled “The Three Things New Dentists Need to Know About the Future of Dental Practice.” I’d like to share a few things with you that I found critically important to make you, our leaders in Massachusetts, aware of.

The first thing he instructed them that they need to know is that there will be “intensified consumerism,” which will be led by nine specific drivers. I thought this was so important that I have included [the video he showed us](#) to give us all something to think about. I’m sure this has left you with more questions and concerns, as it did me. Trust me—we will be discussing this now at a future Board meeting and will address this with our members to help support them through this process, rather than waiting for more evidence that these drivers are upon us.

Second, is the shifting demographics of women vs. men in the workforce. For the first time in history, there are now more working women than there are men. The other demographics that are changing is the switch of millennials now being most of the population. The boomers are beginning to pass away, and this segment of the population will continue to shrink as time moves on.

Third, digital technology in the dental practice is changing faster than we can keep up. Some of us in the boomer generation still have limited knowledge of computers and their programs! Never mind making us change how we do things in the office! Outside of the office, new businesses are being created more rapidly than ever to meet the increasing demand of the population, including teledentistry, mobile dentistry, and printing dentures.

The bottom line: in order to come to your practice, consumers are looking for these things:

- *Convenience
- *Ease of Use
- *Cheaper Cost
- *On Their Terms

While I wrap this up, I want to come back to the goals of the Society. While I may be focused on the young dentists’ initiatives that I have in mind, please know that we as a group, as a Board, will be focused on all four of these strategic goals as we move forward. All of you, as the leaders from your District in the state, need to think about these goals and the impact these will have on you. Determine how you fit in and can support us. Working together lightens the load and makes it easier to carry. How can you engage the new dentists in your District? What do they need? I will tell you, most of them need you. They need you to introduce yourself. To make them feel welcome and to encourage them to participate. Even if it is only for an hour or for a virtual

meeting. Look at the ways things can be done differently. And, if there are DSOs in your area, please meet the dentists of these practices. While they may not look like you or work like you, they are your colleagues and fellow human beings. This is all that is needed. Embrace the change.

Leaders never become leaders on their own. As Hillary Clinton is fond of saying, "It takes a village." First, professionally, I would like to thank my fellow Board members, past and present, whom I have learned so much from. Many of you have led me through the years with your support, feedback, and guidance. For that, I will always be thankful. I want to especially thank two people in that role that really made a difference in my time here at MDS: Drs. Howard Zolot and Janis Moriarty. Thank you both. To the team that makes us all look great, the staff at MDS, thank you for all you do. It is amazing to see the vision of the HOD moving to Yankee come to fruition. We know it never would have happened without you.

Finally, the presence of love in our life not only brings us great joy, but it enhances us as human beings. So, first I want to thank my life partner, Steve Turner, who no matter how many meetings, how much work, and how much travel I do, he is always there to greet me with a smile on his face and a warm embrace. My life is enriched beyond measure because you are in it. Thank you, love. To my son-in-law Dan, who is the rock in my daughter's life and the father of my grandson Gavin, thank you so much for finding Courtney and making her your wife. I love knowing I can worry a little bit less now that you are in her world! To my little love Gavin, I can't wait to see what you become as you get older! Your Mimi will be with you every step of the way in any way she can! And, finally, to the one person who has been the beat of my heart since the day she was born, my beautiful daughter Courtney. I could not be prouder of the magnificent woman you have become. You are not only a strong woman, you are an amazing businesswoman and leader in your own right. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to become the woman I wanted to be by allowing me the freedom to leave you when you were young. I know you didn't really have a choice way back then, but I want you to know how much I appreciate the time we have now because of all the time we missed when I was in school ... not to mention all the times I forgot to pick you up at school! I promise I won't do that to Gavin!

Thank you very much.