

Annual Report to the House of Delegates, January 26, 2022, from the

Executive Director

As Executive Director, I herewith submit the following report:

2021 posed new challenges for society, the profession, and the Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS). As vaccinations were released and became widely available, it showed a glimpse of hope that we would be able to beat COVID-19, or at the very least live with it. Just as that seemed like a real possibility, new variants appeared causing widespread concern throughout Massachusetts and the world. The latest variant, Omicron, has led to a significant increase in cases, but appears to cause mostly mild symptoms. We are learning to live with this virus and in doing so, we must learn to adapt and adjust frequently because we simply cannot know what we will face in 1 to 2 months.

The Board of Trustees and the MDS staff have lived in this uncertain world trying to move projects forward without truly knowing what the environment will look like in the future. Although we faced significant hurdles, we have continued our work on member services, launching Dentalpalooza, and returning to an in-person Yankee Dental Congress 2022.

The Board and staff are committed to assisting membership as COVID-19 evolves and we learn to live in this new world created by the pandemic.

Governance

Phase II the governance reform commenced July 1, 2021, with President Dr. Meredith Bailey taking over as the first two-year-term President. The Board of Trustees is now comprised of 13 volunteer members, which is a further reduction of three positions from the previous phase. During this governance year, the Board has been meeting on average more than once per month as it continues dealing with the many challenges caused by the pandemic. It will likely continue at this pace for the remainder of the governance year.

In July and August, the Board of Trustees met for full-day retreat sessions. During the first full day in July, the Board discussed goals for the organization, ranging from short-term three-year goals to long-term 10-year goals. Part of this exercise was to envision what the organization could look like three and 10 years from now. The Board considered things like membership numbers, member benefits, tripartite relationships, and revenue.

In August, utilizing the goals created in July, the Board invited MDS Committee Chairs to attend and reviewed the charges assigned to each Committee. By including the Committee Chairs, the Board hoped to align the Committees around shared goals and ensure that they were aware of the priorities of each Committee.

Government Affairs

The year began with focused activity on public policy stakeholders as the government affairs team advocated to allow dentist and dental professionals access to the COVID-19 vaccinations. Government affairs remained focused on ensuring that dental offices would remain open even with any new resurgence. All conversations with policy makers included advocacy on the multitude of changes that have taken place in dental practices to ensure both the safety of patients and dental professionals.

Recently, the Government Affairs Committee and MDS staff have pivoted their attention to the MDS legislative agenda. MDS is focusing its attention on legislation related to medical loss ratio and assignment of benefits. More details on these bills can be found at <https://www.massdental.org/advocacy/legislation>. MDS has created educational opportunities for members to learn about the issues and how they impact their practices. These efforts will continue as the legislature moves to its second year of the two-year legislative session.

Communications

The MDS Communications Team remained committed to go above and beyond this year to support the needs of MDS members as the pandemic continues to impact the world. The MDS provided members with hundreds of timely updates on critical issues they needed to know to support the needs of their dental practices during these

challenging times. The MDS helped dentists navigate through the phased reopening of the state, equipping members with the relevant information, tools, and guidance to support reopening and returning to pre-COVID service levels, and continues to help address staff concerns. The MDS continues to monitor the outbreak of COVID-19 and has made it a priority to keep members informed of any new developments and recommendations.

Communication channels include the weekly eNews, District emails, *Dental Practice Insights*, *MDS Connection*, the *Journal of the Massachusetts Dental Society*, web content, Regional Trustee Newsletters, and social media.

Dental Practice Support

Throughout the year, the MDS has played a vital role in educating members on issues that impact the dental practice and the changing landscape of dentistry. One of the key challenges this year is the dental assistant shortage that is affecting dental practices throughout Massachusetts. As a result, the Dental Practice and Benefits Committee created the *Dental Assistant Quick Reference Guide*, an on-the-job training (OJT) dental assistant tool to help members navigate the process for employing/licensing an OJT. In addition, the Committee hosted a webinar to further discuss the issue and will be rolling out a multifaceted program this coming year to help address this labor shortage challenge.

Dental Practice Insights

The *Dental Practice Insights*, which is overseen by the Dental Practice and Benefits Committee, continues to be a well-received member benefit. This tool provides our members with tips that they can immediately incorporate into their practices. Tips over the past year have included information on the Board of Registration in Dentistry (BORID), health and wellness, state regulations, human resources management, patient communication, and practice management. The email open rate for this feature continues to climb and ranges from 28–60%, depending on the topic.

Webinars

The MDS offered a series of free webinars using Zoom web conferencing technology to support the needs of members. Webinars are designed to be viewed from the convenience of a member's office or home. Some webinars offered continuing education credit while others provided personal and professional enrichment content. When appropriate, the MDS partners with a leading expert to help present the topic. Whenever possible, the webinars are recorded and posted on the MDS website. Members can view past webinars in the online learning section of our website at <https://www.massdental.org/webinars/#personal-and-professional-enrichment-webinars>.

Member Assistance Center

The MDS Member Assistance Center (MAC), which was launched six years ago, is a member-exclusive service designed to help MDS members get the most out of their membership by providing dedicated staff to answer member questions. Members no longer need to determine the right staff person to call for a specific question; they can simply call 800.342.8747 and get connected to a MAC representative. MAC representatives are knowledgeable on a broad range of subjects, and in most cases, have been able to respond directly to member inquiries. When the answer is not available, representatives will track down the answer and find a resolution. The MAC averages 300-400 calls per month. Most of the calls this year were on practice management issues, COVID-19 concerns, regulation concerns, dental benefits issues, and membership renewals.

Peer Review

The MDS Peer Review Program is an important member benefit that helps resolve complaints submitted against members by their patients without the need to go through BORID. Over the past year, the MDS has trained District Peer Review Committee members on the guidelines and processes to follow to ensure compliance with the program.

Health and Wellness

The health and wellness of our members is very important to maintaining a thriving Society. The MDS Dentist Health and Wellness Committee has the important role of educating our members on health and wellness topics.

With a growing concern for the health and wellness of our members in 2020, at the height of pandemic, the Committee launched a Facebook group dedicated to promoting health and wellness guidance to members. Over the past year, this Facebook community has continued to grow and increase engagement. Approximately 569 members now participate in this private, active community.

In 2021, the Committee introduced a series of Member Stories that share a member's personal story in an up-close "TED-Talk" fashion. The Committee hopes to create a community where dentists can share their stories, struggles, and strategies, and learn from one another. Two inspirational sessions aired in 2021: one addressing depression and the other discussing medical challenges. These recorded webinars are available for viewing at <https://www.massdental.org/dhwc/#dentist-health-and-wellness-programs>. If you would like to present your story or know a member with a compelling story, please email membership@massdental.org with your suggestion.

The Committee also hosted other events in 2021, including a virtual cooking class in April and a series of virtual book club meetings.

Dental Student Support

The MDS works closely with the three Boston dental schools and hosted several programs for students throughout the year. The showcase events last year were a series of virtual debates that included teams from Tufts University School of Dental Medicine (TUSDM), Boston University Henry M. Goldman School of Dental Medicine (BUGSDM), Harvard School of Dental Medicine (HSDM), University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine, University of New England College of Dental Medicine, and a pre-dental team debating compelling issues. Winners of the preliminary virtual debates advanced to the final round, which occurred during Yankee Virtual 2021. In the end, HSDM was declared the debate winner. The virtual debates were very well attended.

Since live Signing Day programs were not an option this year, the MDS conducted outreach to the three Boston dental schools to encourage graduating students to transfer their membership from the American Student Dental Association (ASDA) to the MDS.

The MDS welcomed new students at the three Boston dental schools during their orientations. MDS President Dr. Meredith Bailey presented at an in-person luncheon at BUGSDM in July to welcome new students at first-year orientation. Welcome videos were shared with TUSDM and HSDM at their respective orientations.

The MDS hosted a virtual Advocacy 101 lunch and learn presentation in October for students at the three schools to help students learn more about the basics of advocacy and how they can get involved.

Membership

The MDS continues to be one of the strongest Dental Societies in the country, with nearly 76% of dentists in the state participating in the Society. This is a major accomplishment. We know the profession is undergoing difficult times and COVID has created even more challenges as we navigate through the pandemic. The profession is also faced with increased regulations, pressure from dental plans and insurance companies on reducing fee schedules, and increased overhead. To stay this strong as a Society is a testimony to our members. Ninety-four percent of our members renewed their memberships this year. Their ongoing commitment to membership is vital to the continued success of organized dentistry and, ultimately, the profession. The MDS is comprised of a diverse group of members with a shared passion for excellence.

Publications

Journal

The *Journal of the Massachusetts Dental Society*, the Society's flagship publication, continued setting an example of editorial excellence this past year. The *Journal* is known for providing content that highlights a wide range of clinical and practice management subjects to benefit readers. Articles featured this year included implicit bias training in dental school admissions, the value of patient-reported outcomes, a retrospective study on traumatic dental injuries in the Greater Boston area, and sedation and anesthesia alternatives in the dental office. The *Journal* also continued to highlight members with features on 2021 William McKenna Volunteer Hero Dr. Sean Rayment and the annual 10 Under Ten recognition program through the Membership Committee.

Last year, the *Journal* had \$82,820.80 in display and classified advertising revenue, which helps to greatly offset printing and mailing costs.

MDS Connection

The *MDS Connection*, the Society's online newsletter, continued to provide members with important practice management and regulatory information. Each issue features 2-4 pages of practice management topics, such as information on the mandatory poster updates for the minimum wage increase and prescription monitoring. In 2021, the newsletter added COVID-19-specific pages, giving members all the updated COVID information in one spot. The newsletter regularly features educational and informative content on the MDS Foundation, advocacy efforts, membership initiatives and events, Member Savings Program partners, and governance. In 2021, the *MDS Connection* saw classified ad revenue of \$965.40, which is offset by zero production costs. This figure is lower than past years due to the transition of the MDS's Classifieds section to the new MDS Career Center on May 1, 2021.

Word of Mouth

Word of Mouth is the Society's semi-annual consumer oral health newsletter and is made available online for members and the public. The MDS encourages members to share the articles with their patients via their social media channels. Before the pandemic, three copies of each issue were mailed to all MDS members in active practice, and they could request additional copies for their practice or community events. Additionally, three copies of each issue were mailed to each of the 363 public libraries in Massachusetts, and library directors were also encouraged to request additional copies for their reference sections. After each issue mails, we would routinely receive multiple calls from members and libraries requesting extra copies. Copies of the publication were also sent to several schools with dental assisting programs. Due to COVID safety protocols, *Word of Mouth* ceased to be printed and mailed to members and libraries and instead has only been published as a digital newsletter on the MDS website.

The Winter-Spring 2021 issue featured a cover story on how safe it is to go to the dentist during the pandemic because dental practices have been on top of infection control protocols for years, as well as articles on COVID-19 stress and bruxism and the importance of mouthguards for spring sports high school athletes. The Summer-Fall 2021 issue looked at the misapprehension that face masks cause bad breath and the importance of back-to-school dental exams for children.

MDS Learning

The Dental Education Committee continues to develop continuing education programs to enhance the member dentist and their staff throughout the practice and patient care. A sampling of topics being discussed are:

- Treatment Planning: discussing different doctor's perspectives, styles, and specialties
- Full-day courses with more concentrated programming, including a Mini Dental Residency being discussed for Yankee Dental Congress 2023

Yankee Study Club

The first two Modules of the (five sessions each) Yankee Study Club were a great success in 2021. Each session was held virtually on Wednesday evenings with more than 100 attendees per Module. The clinicians continue to evolve the curriculum, with the Spring 2022 program also being available as individual sessions. Some of the upcoming topics include:

- Pediatric Dentistry
- Gingival Recession
- Restorative/Cement
- Lab Technicians
- Endodontic Non-Vital Intracoronal Bleaching

The next Module will begin on Wednesday, March 2, 2022.

Dentalpalooza 2021

Since Yankee 2021 was forced to move to a virtual platform due to in-person gathering restrictions, the MDS felt it was important to look for other opportunities to bring dental professionals together to learn and interact. On June 4, 2021, the MDS hosted more than 1,500 attendees and 70-plus exhibitors at the Lawn on D in Boston. In addition to nearly 20 CE courses, Dentalpalooza offered a party-like experience with games and entertainment. Dentalpalooza was a modern twist on a traditional dental meeting that will influence how we host future meetings.

Yankee Dental Congress 2022

COVID-19 continues to impact the organization and how we put on Yankee. The City of Boston recently imposed a new vaccine mandate that affects all our attendees, exhibiting companies, volunteers, and staff. Nevertheless, the MDS staff and volunteer Yankee leaders continue to bring forward innovative opportunities to learn, engage, and connect within the dental community. There is no other opportunity like this in New England.

This year, in addition to the world-class educational opportunities and the various networking events, MDS is introducing The Hub, which will give industry-leading start-ups an opportunity to pitch their products and services in front of judges with experience investing in oral health start-ups. We expect this to be an exciting new program for both attendees and start-ups hoping to feature their up-and-coming products and services.

Yankee remains a key component of both our member benefits and the business of the MDS. I encourage everyone to attend, follow the safety protocols, and shop the Exhibit Floor.

Conclusion

Although there were challenges, we had some significant highlights this year: Dr. MaryJane Hanlon helped transition the MDS to a new Executive Director in January; the MDS hosted Dentalpalooza; the Board made the final transition to the smaller Board with Dr. Meredith Bailey serving as the first two-year-term President; and we are approaching our return to an in-person Yankee. When you overlay these successes with the challenges the organization faced, it makes them all that much more impressive. This was all done while maintaining a strong financial position moving forward.

I am incredibly proud to be a part of this wonderful organization filled with professional staff and volunteers who have a relentless drive and passion. The volunteers and staff continue to impress members on a daily basis.

I look forward to continuing to build on the success of this past year as we move into 2022.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin C. Monteiro, CAE