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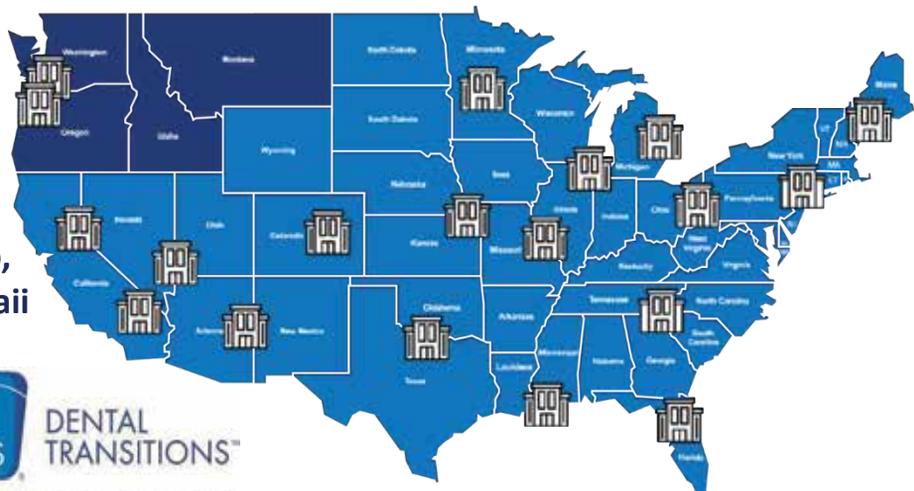
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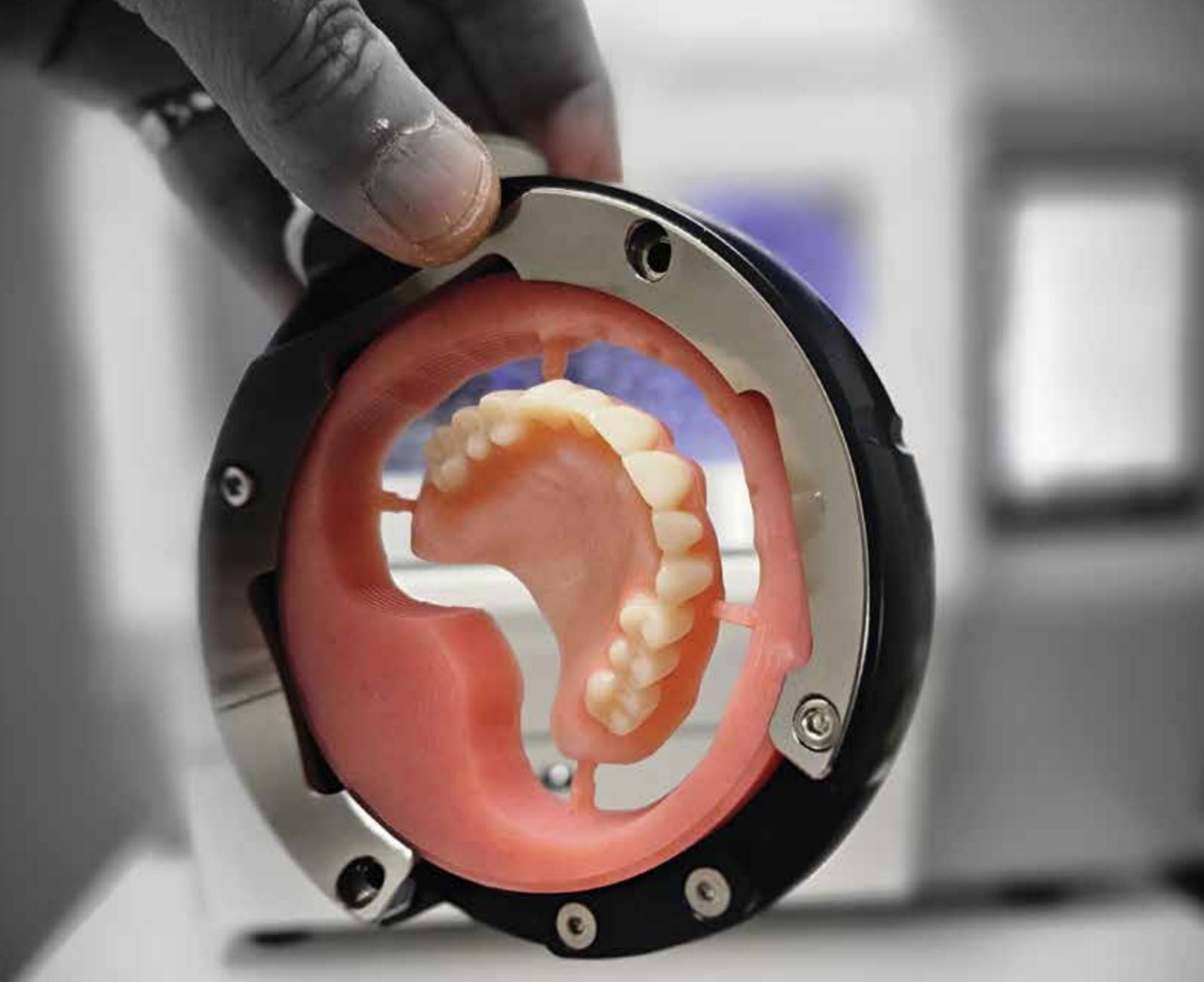
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# My Last Soap Box: Read This, Dang It!

*Exciting news from your editor – I am pregnant and expecting a little boy at the end of January. In the lead up to his arrival, and for a few months after, ODA leaders have stepped in to write some guest editorials. The first is from Dr. Scott Hansen. All members are welcome to submit guest editorials via email ([aschoblask@gmail.com](mailto:aschoblask@gmail.com)).*



By Scott Hansen

## **IN OCTOBER, THE OREGON DENTAL ASSOCIATION (ODA)**

elected a new speaker of the house. No, I didn't lose. I didn't run. I figured it's time to hand over the gavel after six years. But don't worry, the new speaker, Jossi Stokes, is much younger, skinnier, and has better tattoos (ask to see the pictures). But before you're done with me, I want to give you my opinion. Those who have served with me have put up with them for 35+ years, so I figured some of you should have to suffer through them as well.

Since dental school, when someone asked me to be the student rep to the ODA Board of Trustees (long before the days of ASDA), I have been involved in leadership positions across organized dentistry. For the last 20 or so years, I have been serving ODA and Oregon Academy of General Dentistry (AGD). I know many of you might think that you have better things to do, and you're probably right. But who cares. It's your profession as much as it is mine, and we all need to step up to ensure that it will continue to be the great profession that it has long been.

I hear all the time, "I don't have time to serve." Tell me about it – I had four kids under the age of eight when I took my first position on OHSU's Alumni Association Board, where I served for eight or nine years. By the time I was serving on the Oregon AGD Board at the turn of the century, I had nine kids and a growing practice. I was coaching ski teams, soccer teams, and baseball teams. I was a husband, dad, and active church member. I didn't have time, but I made time. Some people might look at my curriculum vitae and think I'm nuts. When I look at it, I think I was – but I have absolutely no regrets.

People ask, "How could you sacrifice so much time?" I always thought a sacrifice was nothing more than giving up something of lesser value for something of greater value. I might not have had time to do a lot of fun things in those years but, let me say, serving organized dentistry was more than fun – it was a blast. I have never been around groups of people who were so fun to be with, made me laugh and cry, and who I learned so much from by rolling up our sleeves and working to make our profession better together. I felt selfish having so much fun and robbing someone else of the opportunity to serve like I did. That is why I kept moving on and allowing other people to serve, because sharing that fun, that growth, that phenomenal learning experience was more fun to share with others. If you haven't been involved, and I

know most of you haven't, you're missing out.

People also ask, "What has the ADA or the ODA done for me?" The beauty of being involved is that you come to realize all the things that they have accomplished for us all. One recent example benefits every one of you who works as a PC or an S corporation. The ADA's D.C.-based advocacy team found that, deep within the One Big Beautiful Bill, there was a stipulation to remove the pass through tax break for PCs and S corporations. Our lobbyists lobbied hard – and succeeded – to keep it in. If you don't know what I'm talking about, your accountant does. Ask them. It probably saves you around \$20,000 a year. And yet not one of you probably knew about it. But somebody has to work behind the scenes to do things like that for all dentists' benefit. Dentistry has been good to me, so I need to help maintain it so that it will be good for my son and future dentists down the road, too.

Not only is it very meaningful and satisfying work to serve you, but the people I have served with, the people who I have learned from, and the people that have helped me on this journey, have been nothing but phenomenal. We have all had different skills, different opinions, different ways of practicing dentistry, and yet we all become friends by working together for you. The current Board of Trustees of the ODA has been a blessing to work with for the last nine years.

# TRANSITION POINTER

## PRACTICES FOR SALE

**BEND** - Collecting \$1,200,000 with buyer net income after expenses and debt service of \$272,000. Hygiene/exams 51% of production and 32% restorative.

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When I left, I was the oldest person in the room, and yet I probably learned more than anyone else in the room. Maybe that says more about my stupidity than my willingness to listen, but I always learned something when some of these younger dentists spoke (and older ones too). I learned and grew and evolved in my opinions. I can't mention everybody, but if you ever want to feel like you're not as smart as you think you are, serve with a Caroline Zeller, an Alayna Schoblaske, a Denise Gates, a Stacy Geisler, or a Todd Beck (OK, Todd and Stacy, you are not young... but you're younger than me). My mentors, people like Bruce Burton, Kim Wright, Jim McMahan, Rick Asai, and others of my generation, were inspirational and amazing. Problem was, we were all of the same generation and thought a lot alike. But we have an executive director at the Oregon Dental Association who, for the past five years, has been inviting innovative thinkers and talented leaders to serve you. You'd have to be stupid not to want to take advantage of learning from them.

And speaking of our executive director, Barry Taylor, he gave up practicing as a dentist to lead us. I'm sure that was not an easy choice, but maybe he wanted to be like his mom, Bernie Taylor, who served as the executive director of Oregon AGD for 39 years. All that knew her, knew that she was one-of-a-kind in the nation. Barry is growing into the same leader that his mother was. And those of you who knew Bernie, know that is the highest of compliments. Barry has a way of bringing the best out in people and having fun while doing it. Unfortunately, he can't do all of the things that we can do to help our ODA and ADA grow and thrive like it needs.

Whether you are willing to admit it or not, you all have talents and abilities that could be used to make our organization grow and thrive. Stop

being selfish. Or maybe, start being selfish and come experience the fun, growth, and excitement that comes from being a leader in the ODA. There are so many opportunities to serve. Step up – don't be a freeloader. Someone was there to make dentistry what it is for you. Don't you think you owe it to the next generation to preserve it the best that it can be preserved? We are the only ones that can ensure that it will happen. Third parties, private equity groups, and people who care more about money than about our profession and our patients will gladly step in and change our profession in profound ways if we don't step up.

You know your grandpa who used to always embarrass you by saying things that were way out of line, but he was too old to care that they were out of line? Well, having 17 grandkids gives me the right to be that senile old man and say things that might offend or embarrass you. You'll live. I grew up in a generation that was told, "No!" and "Sticks and stones may break your bones but words will never hurt you." So, buck up buttercup and get involved. Ask a friend to get involved with you. Go to a local component meeting or call up someone at the ODA and ask what opportunities are available.

I guarantee you will never have the time to serve. You just have to make it. And then you'll realize that it never was a sacrifice. It was just a blessing in your life. And you'll wonder why you didn't do it sooner. And, as tempting as it might be to use serving as an opportunity to get away from your spouse or your kids, by serving, you are teaching them the true act of selflessness and involvement and they may go on to bless others' lives as they grow older. But now it is time for me to turn out the lights, the party's over. Thanks for reading. You will never have to put up with me again. (Probably...) ●

A photograph of a decorated Christmas tree against a plain white background. The tree is green and has a variety of ornaments including red, green, gold, and blue spheres, as well as gold tinsel and a red star on top. The text 'Merry Christmas' is overlaid in the center in a large, white, sans-serif font.

Merry  
Christmas

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# Welcome New and Returning ODA Members

**WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST AND RETURNING MEMBERS!** Please reach out to these members and welcome them into the ODA community.

**Peter Amundson, DMD**  
Central Oregon Dental Society

**Francois Fisselier, DMD**  
Multnomah Dental Society

**Bryan Rogers, MD, DMD**  
Southern Oregon Dental Society

**Stephanie Bobbitt, DDS**  
Multnomah Dental Society

**Daniel Hoopes, DDS**  
Washington County Dental Society

**Jay Schofield, DMD**  
Marion Polk Dental Society

**Jessica Bong, DDS**  
Multnomah Dental Society

**Caroline Leibrecht, DMD**  
Rogue Valley Dental Society

**Dalton Shearer, DMD**  
Multnomah Dental Society

**Patrick Brennan, DDS**  
Mid-Columbia Dental Society

**Ryan Neal, DMD**  
Coastal Cascades Dentist Society

**Venus Tran, DMD**  
Multnomah Dental Society

**Jeff Childreth, DMD**  
Southern Oregon Dental Society

**Hannah Nguyen, DMD**  
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**Adam Vasquez, DMD**  
Washington County Dental Society

**Steven Christensen, DMD**  
Marion Polk Dental Society

**Alison Revling, DDS**  
Central Oregon Dental Society

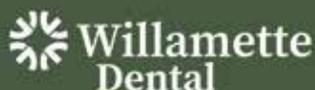
**Matthew Collins, DMD**  
Coastal Cascades Dentist Society

**Michael Reynolds, DMD**  
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# Events & Education Component CE Calendar

CONTINUING  
EDUCATION

Calendar provided by Mehdi Salari, DMD

This calendar is current as of December 1, 2025

Please visit the host dental society website for the most up-to-date information.

Date	Dental Society	Course or Event Title	Speaker	CE	Location	More Information
01/06/26	Marion Polk	Meet and Greet with Salem Mayor Julie Hoy & Advanced Digital Marketing Strategies For Exceptional New Patient Attraction	Stew Bartlett	1.5	Broadway Commons	Register: <a href="http://www.marionpolkdental.org/education">www.marionpolkdental.org/education</a>
01/15/26	Central Oregon	Digital Dentistry: Efficiency & Patient Education	Johnna Nealy with iTero	2	Bend - Currents Restaurants Riverhouse	Contact Dr. Jessica Henderson to RSVP
01/20/26	Coastal Cascades	Protect Your License and Career	Julie Goldberg, DDS	2	Webinar	Register: <a href="http://www.bit.ly/LCDSEVENTBRITE">www.bit.ly/LCDSEVENTBRITE</a>
01/21/26	Multnomah & Washington	Advanced Digital Marketing Strategies	Cory Roletto, WEO Media	2	Oregon AGD Building	Info/Register: <a href="http://www.multnomahdental.org">www.multnomahdental.org</a>
01/27/26	Clackamas	Prosthodontic Course	Dr. Brandon Wilburn	2	Oregon City, Providence Willamette Falls Community Center	Info/Register: <a href="http://www.clackamasdental.com">www.clackamasdental.com</a>
02/03/26	Marion Polk	Lasers in Dentistry	Dr. Levi Shull	1.5	Broadway Commons	Register: <a href="http://www.marionpolkdental.org/education">www.marionpolkdental.org/education</a>
02/07/26	Multnomah	Give Kids a Smile	-	-	Powell Butte Elementary	Info/Register: <a href="http://www.multnomahdental.org">www.multnomahdental.org</a>
02/18/26	Washington	Pathology Course	Dr. Petrisor & Dr. Jelmini	2	Grand Lodge - Forest Grove	Info/Register: <a href="http://www.washingtoncodental.org">www.washingtoncodental.org</a>
02/19/26	Coastal Cascades	Waterlines and Brace Yourself (Workplace conflict)	Kelli Ngariki	2	Corvallis Community Center/Webinar	Register: <a href="http://www.bit.ly/LCDSEVENTBRITE">www.bit.ly/LCDSEVENTBRITE</a>
02/20/26	Coastal Cascades	Infection Control + Cultural Competency (Working with Interpreters)	Kelli Ngariki + Mary Soots	4	Eugene - LCC	Register: <a href="http://www.bit.ly/LCDSEVENTBRITE">www.bit.ly/LCDSEVENTBRITE</a>
02/24/26	Clackamas	Pediatric Course	Dr. Noel Larsen	2	Oregon City, Providence Willamette Falls Community Center	Info/Register: <a href="http://www.clackamasdental.com">www.clackamasdental.com</a>
03/12/26	Multi-Component	St. Patrick's Day Pub Crawl	-	-	SE Portland	Info/Register: <a href="http://www.multnomahdental.org">www.multnomahdental.org</a>
03/12/26	Coastal Cascades	Achieving Success in a Tight Labor Market and Complicated Regulations	Alan Twigg (Brent Ericksen & Associates)	2	Eugene - LCC/ Webinar	Register: <a href="http://www.bit.ly/LCDSEVENTBRITE">www.bit.ly/LCDSEVENTBRITE</a>
03/19/26	Coastal Cascades	Social	-	-	Albany - The Barn	Register: <a href="http://www.bit.ly/LCDSEVENTBRITE">www.bit.ly/LCDSEVENTBRITE</a>
04/02-04/2026	ODA	Oregon Dental Conference	-	-	Portland - Oregon Convention Center	Info/Register: <a href="http://www.oregondental.org">www.oregondental.org</a>
04/21/26	Coastal Cascades	Social	-	-	Eugene - Zest Kitchen and Bar	Register: <a href="http://www.bit.ly/LCDSEVENTBRITE">www.bit.ly/LCDSEVENTBRITE</a>
04/23/26	Multnomah	Annual Meeting	-	-	TBD	Info/Register: <a href="http://www.multnomahdental.org">www.multnomahdental.org</a>

Find this calendar online at [www.oregondental.org](http://www.oregondental.org). Click "Meetings & Events" > "Calendar of Events".

Looking for additional ways to get CE? The American Dental Association has a large collection of webinars and on-demand video learning opportunities available, many of which are free to members. Visit [adaceonline.org](http://adaceonline.org) to catch up on the latest offerings on your own schedule. 🎧

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# A Profile of Dr. Amberena Fairlee

PRESIDENT  
PROFILE

By Barry Finnemore

**AS A CHILD AND EVEN AS A** young adult, Amberena Fairlee, DMD, had no intention of becoming a dentist. After she graduated from high school, her parents simply encouraged her to pursue something that made her happy.

Dr. Fairlee set her sights on settling down and having kids with her future husband, Nathan. Along with that, she enrolled in Central Oregon Community College's dental assisting program. One morning during her practicum at her first dental office in Bend, she was the only assistant on duty because the other assistants were sick. That day went so well that the dentist she worked with told the office to hire her at the first opportunity.

Dr. Fairlee said she "fell in love" with the profession during what

turned out to be a six-year stretch at that practice, which had been open for decades and had nurtured strong relationships with patient families over that time. In fact, her tenure there was a professional turning point, when the nurturing culture of that practice led her to pursue a degree in dentistry.

"I didn't know I wanted to [become a dentist] until I was surrounded by dentists and got to see just what dentistry actually was – how ingrained they were in the community," she said. "They knew about the lives of their patients. I thought it was so appealing to help people during what's normally a scary time [getting dental care] and have them feel like family. I saw the profession from the inside out, assisted so many doctors, and had so many interactions and

developed different relationships. It helped me hone the way I want to practice."

Dr. Fairlee graduated from COCC's dental assisting program in 2007 and went on to receive a bachelor's degree in health studies from Portland State University, and a Doctor of Dental Medicine in general dentistry from Oregon Health & Science University School of Dentistry in 2017.

It was her time at OHSU that saw her interest in professional service grow. She was class president during dental school and went on to become an inaugural year graduate of the Oregon Dental Association's Leadership Academy and a trustee of the association's Central Oregon Dental Society.



DR. FAIRLEE

Family



OHSU Class of 2017 graduation with Dr. Britta Martinez and Dr. Alayna Schoblaske



Volunteering at the Mission of Mercy with Dr. Mike Olin while I was in dental school



Pre-Dental Student Organization at Portland State University with Dr. Eddie Ramirez

Dr. Fairlee recently moved into a new role as the ODA's incoming president. She said her involvement in policy and advocacy stems from wanting to help shape not just the dental field, but also her own career. Among other things, she serves as the ODA's representative on the Dental Assistant Workforce Shortage Advisory Committee to the Oregon Board of Dentistry – a key workforce challenge the ODA will work to alleviate going forward.

"I didn't want my career to just happen to me. I wanted to be involved," she said. "I've always been one of the voices in the room that's not afraid to say the uncomfortable thing, and I've learned it's important to do that."

Dr. Fairlee said one of the things she appreciates most about the ODA is its inclusivity, as it welcomes involvement from dentists of various ages and who work in various practice modalities, and that the varying opinions expressed by members and leaders "are heard and respected."

Dr. Caroline Zeller, DDS, MPH, who is concluding her tenure as the ODA's president, described Dr. Fairlee as relatable, approachable, confident, and bright.

"She's unapologetically herself. There's just a charming quality about her," Dr. Zeller said, noting that her approachability makes people feel comfortable and fosters frank discussions about issues.

Dr. Fairlee's perspective as someone who has worked both as an assistant and a dentist makes her a perfect fit to serve as ODA president.

"She has an ability to understand dentistry from all angles," Dr. Zeller said. "Her perspective of living that [mix of professional roles] is exactly what we need in leadership right now."

Dr. Zeller also said Dr. Fairlee is a "good representative" of a dental field that increasingly is made up of more women and younger practitioners. In addition, she brings a stability and passion for dentistry that allows her "to see the positives" amid challenges.

Dr. Fairlee said ODA's policy priorities during her tenure will be alleviating workforce shortages among assistants, hygienists, and providers in rural areas overall; third-party payer reimbursement reform in both the fee-for-service and Medicaid fee models; and strengthening the role of Oregon dentists as trusted sources for

*"I didn't know I wanted to [become a dentist] until I was surrounded by dentists and got to see just what dentistry actually was – how ingrained they were in the community," she said.*

improving oral health, including in the area of community water fluoridation.

Possible solutions to the workforce shortages that began during the coronavirus pandemic include lowering barriers to education for aspiring assistants, including boosting scholarships to lower-income students, and expanding available certifications so assistants can take on more duties.

"There's no overnight fix," Dr. Fairlee said.

She also said the ODA will pursue legislation designed to reform third-party payer reimbursement to dentists and ensure patients receive timely care. In the case of Medicaid, Dr. Fairlee noted the significant backlog of patients, including the youngest patients, needing treatment.

Ultimately, delays in care "affect patients, and when they are seen, it's



ODA New Dentist Council at the Oregon Dental Conference with Dr. Ty Finmor and Dr. Britta Martinez



Winning the Bend Education Foundation's Trivia Bee with Dr. Mike Olin and Dr. Mehdi Salari on our team, "The Skyline Dental Spit Suckers," while I was a dental assistant

often for care that is more painful and expensive."

Outside of dentistry, Dr. Fairlee and her family – husband Nathan and children Jasper, 10; Fiona, 7; and Henrik, 4 – enjoy disc golf, hiking, and playing board games. She also plays

pub trivia, with her focus being music. She and her team even went to the state finals of Geeks Who Drink, a pub trivia game.

She laughs at her ability to name a song in one second, a skill she honed as a youngster listening to the car

radio with her parents and one that she's passing down to her kids. "I have a superpower," Dr. Fairlee said, "but a superpower that is worthless."

She said her kids are "amazing" at quickly identifying songs and "will be better than me." 🎧

# Your Voice Matters

## Save The Date

Join us for the 2026 ODA Lobby Day

February 5, 2026

Oregon State Capitol  
Salem, OR

*Limited Space Available*

Contact Brett Hamilton [bhamilton@oregondental.org](mailto:bhamilton@oregondental.org)

 **oda** ... *in Salem* **for you**

# 2025 House of Delegates Recap

**THE 2025 ODA HOUSE OF DELEGATES WAS** a significant milestone for the ODA as the delegates in the House of Delegates voted to suspend the current House of Delegates and for the next three years have a hybrid Annual Business Meeting. At the following Annual Business Meeting, members will reassess and evaluate the Annual Business Meeting model and make recommendations for how to proceed in the future. The first Annual Business Meeting will be in 2026 and will be held in person during the weekend of the ODA's Regional Event, October 2nd and 3rd in Sunriver in Central Oregon. There will be a Zoom option to attend the Annual Business Meeting.

Since 2012, the House of Delegates votes on the dues for ODA membership based on a recommended annual adjustment based on inflation. For 2026 dues, the Board of Trustees used the 2024 End of Year West Region Consumer Price Index (CPI) for a city of 2.5 million or less (Portland CPI is no longer being tracked by Bureau of Labor and Statistics because it does not meet the population threshold), which was 2.5%. This would have been a \$20 increase; however, the Board suggested, and the delegate approved, a \$15 dues increase to \$995.

In addition to approving the dues, the House also approved a resolution that would return to a former model that allows new dentists to take five years to pay full ODA dues. After their first 18 months in which dues are free, the dues will then increase in 25% increments annually until they pay 100% of dues in their sixth year.

One of the strengths of the House of Delegates is the opportunity to have a mega-issue discussion. The Board of Trustees and staff have heard from members that the workforce shortage is the number-one priority. ODA is deeply committed to addressing these workforce shortages. In response this year, ODA President Dr. Amberena Fairlee facilitated a discussion regarding the workforce shortage in Oregon. The discussion began with reviewing the latest workforce data and was then followed by a robust discussion about potential short-term and long-term strategies. These ideas were collected and will be used to inform the development of the new three-year strategic plan for the ODA.

ODA's outgoing President, Dr. Caroline Zeller, shared her "State of the Association" address in which she added to the workforce theme when she noted that the ODA has "been building pipelines to the profession through high school

outreach programs, monitoring scope of practice at every turn, and reviewing ADA policies for alternative pathways to licensure." Dr. Zeller also highlighted many of the accomplishments of the ODA during the past year.

The delegates also heard from the incoming ODA President, Dr. Amberena Fairlee, who shared her story of beginning her career as a dental assistant where she found a love for dentistry, and her desire during her term to make sure the ODA prioritizes workforce shortages among assistants, hygienists, and providers in rural areas. Dr. Fairlee also remarked on the importance of continuing to address third-party payer reimbursement reform for both fee-for-service offices and Medicaid programs.

The ODA is a membership organization, and at the House several members were elected to leadership positions. Dr. Todd Beck was elected to a second term as a Trustee, Dr. Zeller was elected to serve as an ADA Delegate-at-Large, Dr. Alayna Schoblaske was elected to her third term as Editor, and Dr. Jossi Stokes will be joining the ODA Board as the new Speaker of the ODA. Additionally, Dr. Charles "Chip" Carriere was reelected to the Leadership Development Committee. ●

ODA STAFF



# Resolutions Passed

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## BOT-1-2025

**Resolved**, that the ODA Bylaws section 2.04 Dues be amended as follows:

(a) Exceptions.

(i) *New Graduates*. The payment of dues for the year of graduation from dental school or completion of an advanced training course of not less than one academic year's duration or residency program which was commenced upon graduation from dental school and the following two years shall be as follows:

Year of Graduation and the first full year following graduation - None.

*Second year following graduation* - 25% of dues for active members plus any dues required for transmittal to the American Dental Association and the component society.

*Third year following graduation* - 50% of the dues for active members plus any dues required for transmittal to the American Dental Association and the component society.

*Fourth year following graduation* - 75% of the dues for active members plus any dues required for transmittal to the American Dental Association and the component society.

*Fifth year following graduation and thereafter* - 100% of the dues for active members plus any dues required for transmittal to the American Dental Association and the component society.

**Furthermore**, all component dental societies are encouraged to review and update their bylaws accordingly to ensure alignment for the 2026 dues cycle.

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## BOT-2-2025

**Resolved**, that that the Oregon Dental Association bylaws be amended to suspend the current House of Delegates; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Oregon Dental Association bylaws be amended to **suspend** the House of Delegates and create a hybrid Annual Business Meeting, to be held at the Regional Event, designed to streamline decision-making, enhance member engagement through a more accessible format, and ensure a robust and responsive governance structure for the Association; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, HOD shall suspend the HOD meeting for three years and in place have a business hybrid meeting. After three years the attendees at the Annual Meeting will reconvene and decide to **return to** the HOD meeting model or continue with the business hybrid meeting structure.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that for the Annual Business Meeting, quorum shall be defined as 1% of total ODA Voting Members, who shall consist of Active, Graduate Student (Post-Doctoral Students), Retired, Disabled, and Life Members, and a minimum of five ODA components represented.

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## BOT-3-2025

**Resolved**, that ...the ODA Bylaws be amended as follows:

### CHAPTER II – MEMBERSHIP

#### SECTION 2.04 DUES

2.04C Amount

*2.04C-1 Active Members.*

(a) *Generally*. Dues for active members shall be **\$995** per year (which includes \$20 to the Dental Foundation of Oregon and \$130 to DOPAC), plus any dues required for transmittal to the American Dental Association and component societies. The member may reassign the \$130 DOPAC contribution to the ODA General Budget Issues Fund or the ODA General Budget. The member may reassign the \$20 Dental Foundation of Oregon contribution to the ODA General Budget Issues Fund, the ODA General Budget, or DOPAC.

# Governance During a Government Shutdown

## IN OCTOBER, NINE ODA MEMBERS TRAVELED TO

Washington, D.C., to take part in the American Dental Association House of Delegates (HOD). The American Dental Association is a membership-driven organization that ultimately turns to its members to decide how it should operate, what it should spend its money (including member dues) on, and what positions it takes when lobbying at the national, state, and local levels.

Because we do not have all-member elections, the annual HOD is a chance for members from each state to gather annually and make decisions on behalf of all members. There are 483 representatives in total. These representatives are called delegates and are all members of the American Dental Association.

This year, Oregon sent seven delegates and two alternate delegates: Dr. Caroline Zeller, Dr. Amberena Fairlee, Dr. Michael Naughton, Dr. Jossi Stokes, Dr. Scott Hansen, Dr. Julie Spaniel, Dr. Eddie Ramirez, Dr. Alayna Schoblaske (alternate), and Dr. Kim Wright (alternate). Some of the delegates shared their reflections on the experience.

You will see a few references to the 11th district. The ADA is divided into 17 geographic districts, and Oregon is part of District 11 with Alaska, Idaho, Montana, and Washington. We are well known for our Pacific Northwest hospitality and welcome all of our members with plenty of love!

## Dr. Amberena Fairlee, ODA President

This year's ADA HOD was a lively one! Due to revelations of previous

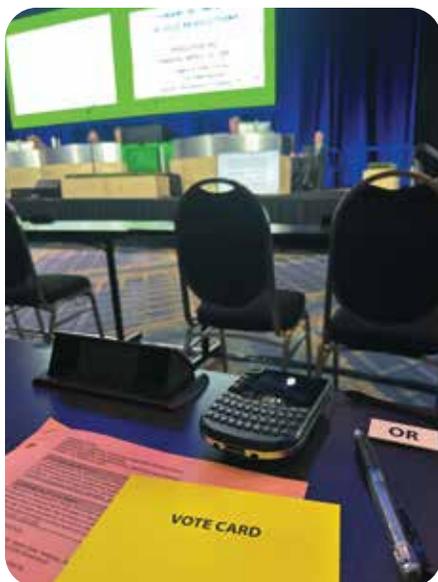
financial mismanagement from leadership, delegates came in fired up and ready to set the ADA on a different course. We saw a record number of resolutions submitted and heard hours of debate over what policies the ADA should adopt moving forward. We even saw a complete 50-50 split vote on a resolution with 462 total votes! I'm excited to see how the ADA takes shape over the coming year.

## Dr. Michael Naughton, ODA Secretary Treasurer

It was an honor to represent Oregon at the 2025 ADA HOD in Washington, D.C. Despite the government shutdown closing many national attractions, the city's energy remained strong with the Marine Corps Marathon, Howard University's homecoming, and the Nvidia GTC conference all underway. That same



DR. JULIE SPANIEL



energy filled the caucus rooms and House floor as delegates from across the country engaged in thoughtful debate on membership, education, governance, and advocacy – working together toward consensus.

Dr. Brett Kessler, concluding his term as the ADA's 161st president, reflected on a year of challenges and resilience for our association. Despite obstacles, I left inspired by the ADA's dedicated leaders and the strength of our tripartite system. The profession's future is bright – rooted in collaboration, service, and a shared commitment to advancing oral health for all.

### Dr. Jossi Stokes, ODA Speaker

Attending my first ADA HOD, I took more of a back seat to the proceedings than our other delegates. And Oregon – you should be proud of the members you sent. We have smart, kind, reflective members who truly want to move the tripartite membership in a positive direction.

From my back seat, here's what I noticed: The vibe was energetic mixed with anger and intensity. It was clear attendees were not happy with what had happened over the last year. The atmosphere was all about change – it was a tough, intense, and



at times chaotic house, but a lot was accomplished. The ADA needs to deliver more than is expected to its members. I hope the new leaders are up for the challenge.

### Dr. Scott Hansen, ODA Immediate Past Speaker of the House

If you think the country is tired of its politics as usual, you should

have been at the ADA HOD. The resignation of the executive director was not enough to satisfy a great number of delegates who voted against the status quo and made some big changes in the governance of the ADA. Some were disappointed, but change is always an opportunity to grow. I hope we can be positive and look for ways to make the best of it.

**Dr. Julie Spaniel,  
ODA Delegate at Large**

Attending the 2025 ADA HOD in Washington, D.C., was both inspiring and energizing. I felt proud to represent Oregon alongside our incredible District 11 colleagues as we tackled a record number of new resolutions during a time when the ADA is focused on transparency, transformation, and financial stewardship.

It was challenging at times to balance innovation with fiscal responsibility, but I left feeling confident that we're keeping the future of our new dentists – and the sustainability of our profession – at the heart of every decision.

What stood out most to me was the camaraderie. Our Oregon team and District 11 friends know how to work hard and have fun doing it! The laughter, collaboration, and shared sense of purpose reminded me why

I'm proud to serve and why the future of dentistry looks so bright.

**Dr. Eddie Ramirez,  
ODA Delegate at Large**

This year's HOD was definitely one for the books. We often hear, "the House has the power," but we don't always see what that means. This year, it was evident that delegates want change and accountability. I'm excited to see what this new chapter brings. As a council member [on the Council on Dental Benefit Programs], I get to be part of some of these changes, and I hope our organization continues to grow.

**Dr. Alayna Schoblaske,  
ODA Editor**

I completed my GPR in Washington, D.C., so it's always a treat to go back! This time around, the city itself felt like kind of a ghost town because the federal government shutdown meant

a huge dip in tourism and, of course, in federal employees coming to work.

The ADA HOD, though, was anything but shut down! We discussed and voted on a record number of policy changes – more than 100 – and grappled with serious concerns about the ADA's current structure. From unionization (not passed) to revoking the Strategic Forecasting Committee (passed), nothing was off limits.

It was also clear that ADA delegates from across the country were ready for a new kind of leadership. For the first time during my time attending HOD, a candidate – Dr. Tom Paumier – ran for president-elect from the floor and was elected. The two other elections were also historic: At 39 years old, Dr. Ben Youel will be the youngest-ever elected member of the Board of Trustees (serving as second vice president), and Dr. Deb Peters will be the first-ever woman speaker of the house. 🗳️

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**oregon dental**  
CONFERENCE

**April 9–11, 2026**  
OregonDentalConference.org

**EXHIBIT HALL**  
April 9–10, 2026

**LOCATION**  
Oregon Convention Center  
Portland, Oregon

# Saluting Childhood Dentists!

*Why the dentist one sees as a child sets the tone for oral health as an adult*

**IN THIS SEASON OF GRATITUDE, WITH OUR** *Tooth Taxi dental team always striving to create the best possible experience for vulnerable children we treat for free across the state, we asked a few board members at The Dental Foundation of Oregon about their early childhood dental experiences.*

“I grew up on well water in a time when my dentist in Maryland wanted to take all of my molars out due to decay,” said **Phillip Marucha**, DMD, PhD, board chair of The Dental Foundation of Oregon. “My dad was in the U.S. Army, and we didn’t always have insurance. At the time, preventive health was not a big part of dentistry, and extraction was part of treatment.

“I was really down about the prognosis. I kept thinking, ‘What the heck am I going to chew with?’ Thankfully, my dad told the guy, no way. I didn’t understand the ramifications at the time, but I remember being grateful to my dad.

“When I was 18, I found a dentist willing to make a bridge, and I got an amalgam and other dental care – but often with no anesthetic. Pain was just part of the deal.”

Board member **Tom Pollard**, DMD, who grew up in Junction City, Ore., has a similar childhood memory. “My first dentist was a classmate of my mother. He didn’t believe in shots to take care of abscesses, so it wasn’t the greatest experience. I remember he had huge hands like a catcher’s mitt. I didn’t mind going in there, but it wasn’t my favorite time.”

**Teri Barichello**, DMD, who grew up in Oregon City, Ore., and is immediate past president of The Dental Foundation of Ore., had a completely different experience. Her first dentist was her dad, **Wayne Barichello**, DMD!

“My dad was a great dentist,” she said. “His dental office was a complete extension of our home, and his staff were like family, so it was very normal to get care from him.

“He took out two wisdom teeth while I was in college, and then **William “Bill” Ten Pas**, DMD, did the post-operative in Corvallis. I was a bit terrified because I’d only ever seen my dad for dental care,” said Barichello, “But Bill did a great job, too. I think I was very lucky!”

Board member and Oregon Dental Association Executive Director **Barry Taylor**, DMD, CAE, said his mother **Bernie** (Bernadette) switched his Portland dental care as a teen to **Philip Reiter**, DMD, because Dr. Reiter believed in fluoride and espoused gold as a superior dental material to silver.

“I needed two fillings in college and Dr. Reiter placed two gold inlays,” said Taylor. “It was my first introduction to gold, and since I was already interested in dentistry, I appreciated Dr. Reiter’s science-based approach.

“Though he passed away in 2022, Dr. Reiter set a very high standard, and I felt he was leading age, which was integral to my excellent dental care as a young person.” ●

The graphic features the text "We're in GIVE! GUIDE" in a mix of green, orange, and blue fonts. The word "GIVE!" is in orange with a gift icon above the 'I', and "GUIDE" is in blue with a dollar sign above the 'I'. Below this, a white rounded rectangle contains the dates "NOV 1-DEC 31" in green. At the bottom, it says "Check us out at GIVEGUIDE.ORG" in green and blue, with a small "give GUIDE" logo to the right.

The Dental Foundation of Oregon is raising funds for children through its Tooth Taxi program. Just \$50 gives a child in need a dental exam, fluoride varnish, and sealants on their permanent molars to help prevent future cavities. Go to <https://smileonoregon.kindful.com> any time, or make a gift through *Willamette Week's Give!Guide* through December 31. Donations made through the Give!Guide on certain Big Give days are eligible for prizes!

# Outgoing President's Address to the Oregon Dental Association House of Delegates



Dr. Caroline Zeller

**DELEGATES, MEMBERS OF THE OREGON DENTAL ASSOCIATION**, honored guests, ODA staff, family, and friends:

Thank you all for joining today. Like many organizations across the country, we've seen the House of Delegates meetings face challenges in maintaining attendance after the pandemic. But you made it – hooray! Maybe somebody pressured you to log on to meet our bylaws' minimum number, or maybe someone leaned on you to show up, or asked you to help, please? But whatever brought you, I sincerely want to thank you for being here – and I'm not upset that you're probably in your pajama pants, or that at least a small percentage of you are lying horizontally in your bed right now. Your presence matters. We'll talk about just how much it matters when we discuss the utility and future of the HOD later in this meeting. So, stay tuned!

## Why I'm Here

Last year in my HOD speech, I told a story about why and how I got involved in the ODA. As you may recall, I had been more than a bit disgruntled with many, many, many things in our profession. I was told that if I really wanted to make things better, I had to join the voice of the profession. After connecting with Conor McNulty, I slowly grew to learn what the ODA and ADA truly are – and how incredibly powerful they can be. Over this past year, it has been undeniably confirmed that there is no organization better suited to do the work that needs to be done to improve our profession and support our ability to care for our patients.

Today I want to focus on two things: first, the perceived value that our members and non-members crave – and second, the value that you didn't even realize you needed.

## What You Asked For

Two months ago, we sent out a survey. While it naturally has a fairly low sample size from our busy members, it still uncovered a clear list of topics that dentists want the ODA to focus on. None of these results surprised me.

With that in mind, I'd like to bring your attention to the ODA's legislative agenda for this year. In doing so, I must first express my immense gratitude to the members of our Regulatory Affairs Committee and this year's legislative task force for the outstanding work they've done. I am so proud of what you have accomplished.

Our legislative agenda focused on three key areas: Medicaid reimbursement rates, insurance reform, and the dental compact for workforce development.

When we place the survey results side by side with our legislative agenda, you can see the direct connection.

Our legislative team took your concerns directly to Salem. They listened, and they acted.

But that's not all the ODA has been doing. On workforce issues, we've been building pipelines to the profession through high school outreach programs, monitoring scope of practice at every turn, and reviewing ADA policies for alternative pathways to licensure. On top of that, we included in next year's strategic plan an exploration of creating our own hygiene program. Finally, we want to hear from you! We know that state workforce issues often require state specific solutions. That is why today's Mega Issue is Workforce. Please speak up today. Tell us what we can do to help you!

For membership cost and value, we have been more budget conscious than ever before. This past year, we listed the building, reduced our number of staff members, will

reduce the number of delegates we take the ADA HOD, and are presenting a resolution today to move the Oregon HOD to an annual business meeting. Additionally, we have pursued other options for non-dues revenue programs that also offer member benefits, like our new insurance plan for long-term care through TDIC, and have almost finalized an association healthcare plan. Finally, we have done more work with the components than ever before, to ensure that dues dollars are being well spent and that each local society provides value to its local members.

### **Continuing Education**

This year we had the most successful regional event thus far, with excellent CE at the beautiful Brasada Ranch. We also launched our winter webinar series in which the mandatory CE required for Oregon licensure was offered for free to ODA members. We also held our annual Oregon Dental Conference. We added new sponsors and exhibitors and were pleased with attendance at a time when in-person CE is challenging to achieve.

### **Fluoride**

Oh man. The ODA has testified in Salem and written letters to local media. During this very challenging time, the ODA has provided resources and support to our communities. We have continued to advocate for public health. Just last week Dr. Denise Gates met with Governor Kotek to discuss access to care for Oregonians. Finally, we have continued to partner with public health organizations. We have partnered with OHA on direct dental payments, ensuring that dentists have a seat at the table, and created relationships with other public health organizations to make sure oral health is never forgotten.

### **Student and New Dentist Engagement**

Our relationship with OHSU remains very strong. The regional event and Multnomah County new dentist events have been wildly successful with the help of Lora Mattson. Additionally, by the end of the year, a member of the ODA team or BOT will have visited almost every component. We believe it is important to lean into new dentist, in-person engagement.

All of this is to say: We care, we're listening, and we are devoting the resources we have to your interests.

Now, onto a much scarier slide.

### **What You Need But Didn't Know You Needed**

Healthcare is being threatened in a way it never has before. Fluoride recommendations are under attack. Federally funded research is being questioned. Medicaid funding is uncertain. Student loan forgiveness programs are in jeopardy. Scope of practice is being challenged. Reimbursement rates continue to stagnate. We're facing critical shortages of auxiliary staff.

I'm going to be honest with you. Early in my career, I hated language like "protecting" or "defending" dentistry. For me, those words felt like they blocked the capacity for change. Defensiveness felt like the opposite of progress. Instead, I wanted to feel like we were always open to evolving, so long as those adjustments resulted in improved quality for our patients and ourselves.

But the reality over this past year – and probably the handful of years before that – is that dentistry is under attack. And for the next few minutes of my speech, I want to remind you that without the ODA and the ADA, dentistry in this country would actually be far worse off than it is today.

## Who Would Fight If We Weren't Here?

If we weren't here, who do you think would be doing this work? Who would be protecting dentists? Who would be going to the Capitol, sitting down with the Oregon Board of Dentistry, writing articles about fluoride, working with our academic institutions to support students, being there when dentists are justifiably getting burned out and feeling depressed about the real challenges they face? Oh, and don't forget making sure you can get your mandatory CE so you can keep doing this job!

Do you understand how important it is that the ODA and ADA are the voices of dentistry in Oregon and the nation? Who else would it be if not us? Do you think anyone else would have your best interests at heart?

Just a few weeks ago, the Oregon healthcare committee held an informational session seeking feedback from organizations on the impact of H.R. 1, also known as the "Big Beautiful Bill." They could have reached out to the Oregon Board of Dentistry, CCOs and their dental counterparts, large group practice owners, or insurance plans. But instead, they reached out to us, the ODA. Because they wanted to know how it was going to affect dentists, and we speak for dentists. For us to provide testimony on how losing the dental benefit in Medicaid would impact the dental workforce and our ability to improve oral health for Oregonians. I was also able to speak to how H.R. 1 could impact dental education by altering students' ability to pay for school and the downstream impact it would have on providing equitable education and patient care.

Again, had it not been us, the ODA, would our concerns and interests have been properly voiced? If the ODA voice was not heard in Salem, or if the ADA voice was not heard in D.C., I can promise you that our profession would be

in worse shape than what you see today. Reimbursement rates would drop even more. Scope of practice changes could impact patient safety and quality of care. We would move even further away from having the type of dental team we need to properly care for our patients, pay our staff, and pay off our student debt. Don't get me started on student debt.

## The Challenge of Modern Membership

I recognize that my audience right now includes a group of you who have consistently remained loyal members, never questioning whether you should pay your dues. You're our heroes, the OGs, we wouldn't be here without you. I also know a number of you in the audience are not quite that true-blue – yet. And some of you are new enough that you haven't even started paying dues.

But here's something else I know:

"People are less likely to be card-carrying members of organizations or to forge decades-long relationships with institutions," as Jeremy Heimans wrote in *New Power*.

The newer generations – which includes my generation – require consistent and clear signs of value. They are less likely to pay membership dues out of a feeling of being a loyal member of this profession, especially when dues are not cheap. And while the constant value of the ODA is always present and being provided, we know that members and non-members are not consuming our communications or getting involved frequently enough. When benefits are not accessed, our constant value becomes harder to see.

But I can promise you that these newer dentists are concerned about the future of our profession. We hear it all the time. Bring them closer in by asking them, "How do you feel about healthcare these days? How do you feel about joining the dental

profession? Do you feel confident that it is going to continue to be what you signed up for? Are you concerned where it might go because of the pressures of the world?" SAME. We are the same. Join us.

I hope, if there's one thing my speech has done today, it's convince you that without the ODA, our profession would be facing a very different – and much darker – reality. We're holding the line and we will keep fighting for our profession, our colleagues, and the health of Oregonians.

## What You Can Do

If you're feeling concerned about the future of dentistry, there are three simple things you can do:

1. Get more involved with the ODA. Volunteer your precious time; it will be most appreciated and put to very good use.
2. Continue paying your dues.
3. Encourage your colleagues to become members.

Tell them! When you hear them voice frustration about the workforce, about insurance, or about how more and more patients are declining fluoride varnish – bring up the ODA. Tell them that, at the end of the day, the ODA is the organization that really has their back, and that it's where their voice is valued, whether they realize it or not.

In 2018, when I decided to become more involved in the ODA, I wanted change. I wanted to make things better. And even though it hasn't always been the smoothest ride, after all these years, I have solid proof that devoting my time and money to the ODA has been the most effective way of making things better.

## Gratitude

Before I finish, I want to tell you who I'm talking about when I refer to "the ODA," and offer my most sincere gratitude to them.

I want to start by thanking our Board of Trustees. This past year's BOT was

quite dreamy. I personally find that one of the most valuable assets of a board is diversity of thought and a sense of safety in sharing your voice.

Here is how these two crucial elements existed this past year. In planning for a board meeting, there are frequently topics that need to be discussed, with associated action items – the board will need to decide by the end of the meeting whether we would like to vote yes or no. Perhaps the Board of Dentistry has reached out asking where the ODA stands on a scope of practice issues. In these circumstances, only two things always remained true: 1 – I could never guess with confidence where the board was going to land, and 2 – I could never successfully predict how much time the board would need for discussion.

Why? Diversity of thought and safety speaking up – our board takes every decision very seriously. They do not cut corners, and they do not stop until they feel they have gotten it right.

I would also like to thank the leader of the ODA, Barry Taylor. One of his most excellent traits is that Barry knows when to lead and when to listen. This is not always the way it goes in organizations like this, and it is not something to take for granted. Barry, your guidance and vision have been invaluable this past year. Thank you for always listening and looking to improve.

I would also like to send out a special thank you to Melissa, Debbie, and Heather. They were really tested this year with an online platform known as Fonteva. Your work and dedication during such a trying time is appreciated and admired.

My next shout-out is for Alisha. For those of you who attended the ODC and Regional Event – you know. She is skilled and passionate. Make sure you sign up for next year’s regional event and watch Alisha work her magic!

Finally, our legislative team led by Brett, along with George and Sabrina, has been exceptional. Your work in

Salem protects every single dentist in this state, and we are deeply grateful.

As a final note, I’m excited to welcome our dynamic incoming president, Dr. Amberena Fairlee. Dr. Fairlee is smart – I’m talking freakishly smart. She hears a discussion and immediately homes in on what is actually important. She acts quickly and is never afraid to speak her mind. While Dr. Fairlee would be successful no matter when she became president, her particularly excellent qualities are precisely what we need at the ODA at this time. It’s an honor to pass this torch to her capable hands!

### **In Closing**

Thank you all for being here, for staying engaged, and for believing in the power of organized dentistry. We’ve got important work ahead of us, and I know we’re up for it. Let’s keep showing up for each other, for our patients, and for the future of dentistry in Oregon! 🌟

The graphic features a blue silhouette of an Oregon city skyline at the bottom, including a bridge on the left and a large tooth icon in the center. Above the skyline, the text reads: "Nominations Now OPEN!" in a teal, slanted font. To the right is the Oregon Dental Association logo, consisting of a blue circle with a white crescent and the text "oregon dental ASSOCIATION". The main title "2026 ODA NEW DENTIST AWARD" is centered in a large, bold, black serif font. Below the title, a list of past winners is shown: "2023 - DR. NOELLE KLEMMANN", "2024 - DR. ADAM FOX", "2025 - DR. MARIAH BALDWIN", and "2026 - WILL YOU BE NEXT?" in a teal font. The website "WWW.OREGONDENTAL.ORG" is printed in a black sans-serif font above the skyline.

# Trapezius Myalgia: Making Dentistry a Pain in the Neck – or Head

Dr. Bethany Valachi, PT, DPT, MS, CEAS

## BY MIDMORNING, IT STARTS... AGAIN; THE ALL-TOO-FAMILIAR

“TENSION headache” that soon evolves into a headache behind the dentist’s right eye, and pain in his right temple. In an adjacent operator, the hygienist experiences burning pain on the left side of her neck. Why does this happen? Both clinicians recently embarked upon diligent exercise programs with their personal trainers in an effort to improve their musculoskeletal health and avoid such painful episodes.

Does this sound familiar? If so, you’re in good company – the incidence of neck pain among dentists and hygienists has been reported as high as 71% and 82%, respectively. The causes of headaches and neck pain are multifactorial; however, in dentistry, the upper trapezius muscle is the culprit in a myriad of head- and neck-pain syndromes.

The delivery of dental care places high demands on this muscle, and can result in a painful condition called trapezius myalgia. Symptoms include

pain, spasms, or tenderness in the upper trapezius muscle, often on the side of the mirror, or retracting arm (Figure 1). Trigger points in this muscle result in headaches behind the eye, into the temple, and in the back of the neck.

The upper trapezius muscles are responsible for elevating the shoulders, and rotating the neck. In rounded-shoulder posture, the upper trapezius and neck muscles largely support the arm’s weight, increasing muscular strain on the neck and shoulder. In dentistry, trapezius myalgia is caused by static, prolonged elevation of the shoulders, mental stress, infrequent breaks, and poor head posture.

## Causes of Trapezius Myalgia

**Positioning the patient is too high.** When the patient is positioned too high (Figure 2) the operator is forced to assume one of two postures – working with the shoulders elevated (which leads to trapezius myalgia), or shoulder abduction (which leads to rotator-cuff impingement).

Patients should be positioned so the oral cavity is at elbow level, or 4 cm above elbow level. When the patient is higher than this, arm abduction, or shoulder elevation typically occurs, especially when working between the 8 o’clock and 10 o’clock positions.

Working in the correct clock position for a specific tooth surface and quadrant, while preserving your optimal posture, and patient comfort, is critical for preventing upper trapezius pain. This is covered in Dr. Valachi’s online CE course: “Treat & Beat your Upper Trapezius Pain,” at [www.posturedontics.com](http://www.posturedontics.com).

### Non-ergonomic magnification.

Poor head posture is commonly observed in the operator, and strains the upper trapezius muscles. Loupes with poor declination angles are one of the biggest culprits I’ve seen that can cause or worsen trapezius myalgia. About 70% of the loupes on the market today don’t offer a steep enough declination angle to prevent trapezius myalgia. For more information on proper loupe selection, and brand recommendations, see Dr. Valachi’s online CE course: “Treat & Beat your Upper Trapezius Pain,” at [www.posturedontics.com](http://www.posturedontics.com).

### No armrests / Improper height.

Supporting the arm weight is especially important for trapezius myalgia sufferers. Clinicians should make sure their armrest height is adjusted properly. Adjusting the armrests too high can cause neck stiffness and pain at the crook of the neck and shoulder; however, adjusting them too low can also lead to neck pain.

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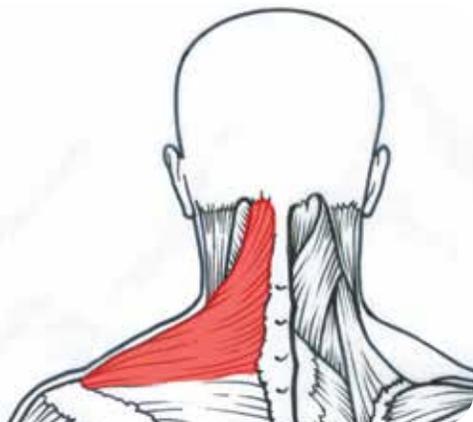


Figure 1: The left upper trapezius muscle



Figure 2: Positioning the patient too high – and working in the wrong clock position – can lead to trapezius myalgia



Figure 3: Certain exercises (that aren't a problem for the general public) can throw dental professionals into the "vicious pain cycle," causing trapezius myalgia

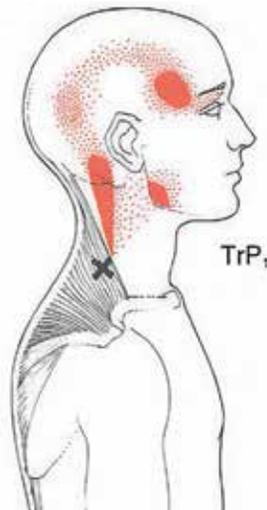


Figure 4: Untreated trigger points in the upper trapezius can refer a "headache behind the eye"

### Infrequent breaks / tightness.

One EMG study of the neck, shoulders, and arms showed that the highest muscular activity during dental work occurs in the trapezius muscles. Sustained low-level contraction of these muscles, with few breaks, greatly increases susceptibility to pain. With insufficient rest periods, or dynamic movement (i.e., chairside stretching), tension can accumulate in these muscles, and by the end of the day, you may be wearing your shoulders as "earrings," without realizing it. Chairside stretching every 45 minutes is important to prevent trapezius myalgia. Stretches to prevent trapezius myalgia are in Dr. Valachi's online CE Course, "Treat & Beat Your Upper Trapezius Pain," at [www.posturedontics.com](http://www.posturedontics.com).

**Stress.** Common clichés such as "pain in the neck" allude to stress as a cause of pain. This association is actually quite true. High levels of emotional stress, and working at complex tasks, can elicit muscular contraction in the upper trapezius muscle. This subconscious muscular contraction in response to stress is called neuromuscular hypertension. If the stress response is not followed

by dynamic muscular activity, the blood pressure has no outlet, and continues to rise. The statically contracted muscle becomes ischemic and painful, while the blood pressure remains high. Therefore, stress-management strategies that specifically target muscular-type pain are helpful in prevention. Numerous techniques to manage this physiological reaction to stress are in Dr. Valachi's online CE course, "Manage Stress & Prevent Your Pain," at [www.posturedontics.com](http://www.posturedontics.com).

**Improper exercises.** Training the upper trapezius muscle with heavy weight resistance is one of the most common exercise mistakes dental professionals make.

This can worsen the unique muscle imbalance to which they are already prone, create trigger points, and worsen neck pain. Dental professionals are prone to a unique muscle imbalance, which causes, and worsens, trapezius myalgia. Team members should target this imbalance with shoulder stabilization exercises, and very specific aerobic exercises, which are in Dr. Valachi's online CE course, "Treat & Beat your Upper Trapezius Pain," at [www.posturedontics.com](http://www.posturedontics.com).

**Wardrobe risk factors.** Narrow bra straps can compress the upper trapezius muscles, worsen neck pain, and create headaches, especially among female dental professionals with large chests. Racer-back sports bras have wider straps, and are a better choice. A purse slung over one shoulder can also perpetuate muscle imbalances to which female dental professionals are prone, since the trapezius muscle must contract unilaterally to support the weight.

**Trigger points.** Trigger points in the upper trapezius muscles can refer pain to the temple, cause a "headache behind the eye," or cause pain in the back of the neck (Figure 4). Once the diagnosis is determined to be myofascial or muscular in nature, consider self-treating your own trigger points. An effective combination is moist heat, then trigger-point self-treatment, followed by a sustained stretch of the affected muscle. Dr. Valachi teaches a specific five-step protocol for self-treating the 11 key painful trigger points that plague dental professionals in her course, "Treat & Beat Your Myofascial Pain," at [www.posturedontics.com](http://www.posturedontics.com).

**Dr. Bethany Valachi, PT, DPT, MS, CEAS** is author of the book, "Practice Dentistry Pain-Free," clinical instructor of ergonomics at OHSU School of Dentistry in Portland, Ore., and is recognized internationally as an expert in dental ergonomics. Bethany is founder and CEO of Posturedontics®, a company that provides research-based dental ergonomic education. For over 20 years, Dr. Valachi has helped thousands of dental professionals prevent pain, and extend their careers with her ground-breaking dental ergonomic education. She has published more than 80 articles in dental journals, and offers online dental ergonomic CE courses on her website at [www.posturedontics.com](http://www.posturedontics.com). ●

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# Meet Your ODA Wellness Ambassadors

WELLNESS

By the ODA Wellness Committee

## DENTISTRY CAN BE IMMENSELY FULFILLING – AND

deeply demanding. The Oregon Dental Association's Wellness Initiative exists to remind members that well-being matters just as much as clinical skill, or professional success. Behind every conversation and resource are volunteer Wellness Ambassadors who understand the challenges dentists face, and are ready to listen with empathy and confidentiality.

Two of those ambassadors, **Dr. David J. Dowsett** and **Dr. Todd Beck**, shared their stories, and the personal experiences that inspire them to help their colleagues.



### Dr. David J. Dowsett

"In 2003, about eight years into practice, I badly injured – and nearly lost – my right index finger," recalled Dr. Dowsett. "Thanks to a brilliant surgeon, physical therapist, and the incredible help of several colleagues, everything turned out OK – finger, and practice survived."

"At that time, there was a burgeoning dentist well-being support program, and I was able to talk through my ordeal with a colleague who had experienced a similar injury," he continued. "I was so grateful for the support, and simply wanted to pay it forward."

Dr. Dowsett's commitment to peer support deepened through loss. "Three of my dearest friends have committed suicide," he shared. "Each, in their own way, were beautiful, bright, successful, driven, beloved, kind leaders with so many gifts to share. From the moment of

each phone call, and through all the grieving, I felt powerless, and struggled (to a lesser extent, still do) with asking myself – 'If only I had spoken up or done something, maybe things would be different.'"

"I realized I didn't have the tools to be comfortable being uncomfortable, and decided to commit to learning how to help, understand, and be at peace with 'I'm not responsible for saving someone, but I can help,'" he explained. "There is so much shame and fear in discussing mental health – it's uncomfortable, awkward, sometimes painful, but I realized that not saying anything is worse. I'm still learning, and getting more comfortable leaning into the discussion."

Dr. Dowsett observes that many dentists experience similar pressures: "Disappointment and unrealized expectations, being pulled in all directions as caregivers, leaders, employees, bosses, family members and the like. Financial stress, time commitments. Being seen by others as 'having it all,' and internally 'needing to hold it together for everyone else.'"

When it comes to balance, he said, "I'm not sure there is balance, but rather prioritizing. I try very hard to remember what is truly important in my life, take pause, and ask – 'Will this opportunity come around again? Does this align with my purpose, goals?'"

"I am learning to say 'no' more often to things that are worthwhile, and I would really like to do, while at the same time overwhelm, and distract me from my core values," he added. "I am also choosing to say yes to things which simply bring me joy, and nurture those core values."

He has also learned that supporting others helps him stay grounded. "While I do believe that taking care of oneself is vital, I often find that helping, listening to, and paying attention to others can be the best way to

*“Now, more than ever, we need to take a healthy approach to help each other, and help ourselves. The stressors have always been, and will always be in our lives. How we deal with them makes all the difference to our mental health and well-being.”*

---

get me out of my own head, ground me, and bring me out of a low spot.”

To those who may be hesitant to reach out, Dr. Dowsett offers encouragement: “It’s hard. I know. We are all the stereotypical, high-functioning, self-driven achievers – ‘I’m good. I got this. I’m fine.’ Except when you aren’t.”

“Being vulnerable takes courage,” he said. “Asking for help shows strength, and I think we all admire those who do ask. Share with those deserving of your trust – they want to help – because they care about you. It is scary, but when you do, things really do get better. It’s sort of cheesy, but it’s true – the load is lighter when more people are carrying it.”

He reminds his colleagues that mental health is integral to overall health. “The more we talk about it, the less stigmatized, and uncomfortable it becomes to address. Pay attention to your peers, and trust your instincts. Ask questions, take some education sessions through resources like Hope for the Day, and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.”



### **Dr. Todd Beck**

“I have been involved with the ODA Wellness program for the past 25 years,” said Dr. Beck. “Dentistry is a demanding profession. From time to time, we all need help. I have found, over the years, that by helping others, I am helping myself.”

He shares that his commitment to wellness began with personal experience. “I have been in recovery since 2000. In the beginning of my career, I turned to substances as a coping method. I was incredibly fortunate to have received help early on. I was introduced to a recovery program, and all the people and support I needed. Life gets messy and difficult for all of us. Being involved in the wellbeing of

others helps all of us get to the other side of any issue.”

Dr. Beck noted that “the pressures on dentists today can be immense. The cost of education, setting up or buying a practice, managing your team, staff shortages, increasing overhead ... and the list goes on. Now, more than ever, we need to take a healthy approach to help each other, and help ourselves. The stressors have always been, and will always be in our lives. How we deal with them makes all the difference to our mental health and well-being.”

On maintaining balance, he reflected, “This has evolved over the years. I have learned to put boundaries around my professional and personal lives. I take care of my patients to the absolute best of my ability, knowing my limitations, and am never afraid to refer or ask a colleague for their input. I remain active in my recovery, and have hobbies and interests that align with a healthy lifestyle. I have a group of friends, very close friends, that check in regularly with each other. We are a core support group for each other, and have been for 25 years.”

To colleagues who may be struggling, he said, “Ask for help! There is no shame in admitting you are struggling. We only want to help you feel, and be better. Talking to someone who has been where you are makes all the difference in the world.”

Dr. Beck also emphasizes the importance of connection and empathy. “We are all in this crazy life together. We need to help, and support each other. At the end of the day, none of us are that unique. There are many others who are struggling right along with you. Dentistry is a demanding profession with very specific stressors. Being able to talk to a colleague who has been through it is an amazing gift.”

He encourages anyone in need to reach out. “Start with contacting the Wellness Committee. There are so many resources for anyone suffering from any number of mental health, and substance-abuse issues. You don’t have to live with that knot in your stomach, and monkey on your back, you really don’t.”

To be connected with a Wellness Ambassador, please visit [www.oregondental.org/wellness](http://www.oregondental.org/wellness) to fill out a confidential form or call the office at (503) 218-2010 ext. 2007. ●

# Clackamas County Dental Society's Fall Social

By Lora Mattsen, Executive Director Clackamas County Dental Society

## COMPONENT HIGHLIGHTS

**CLACKAMAS COUNTY DENTAL SOCIETY HELD ITS ANNUAL** Free Fall Social and Arcade Challenge on September 25th at Dave & Busters in Clackamas.

Following opening comments, including introductions and sponsorship appreciation delivered by Dr. Bryan Schofield, dinner was served and game instructions were provided.

The attendees then headed out to the arcade floor for some intense competition to achieve the highest scores on five different games. They included basketball, football, skee

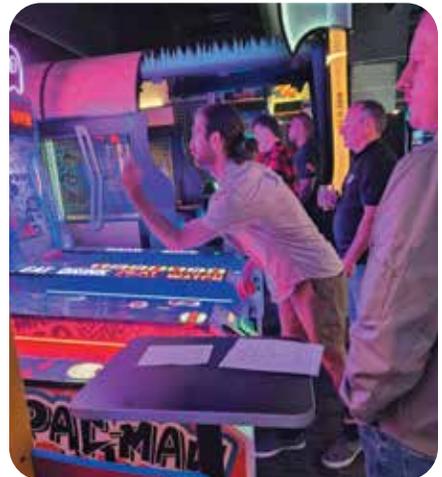
ball, hatchet toss, and down the clown. Competitors made the rounds to all the games in an effort to earn the highest score and win a prize. The top five scorers of each game won a prize from the donated gift table. Once the top winners received their prizes, the remaining gifts were raffled off until they were all distributed.

A sincere appreciation is extended to all the members, sponsors, and others who donated such generous prizes.

Sponsors for the evening included Astra Practice Partners, BNK

Construction, Dentsply, Fluence, Heritage Bank, and TDIC – thank you for your generous support and active participation!

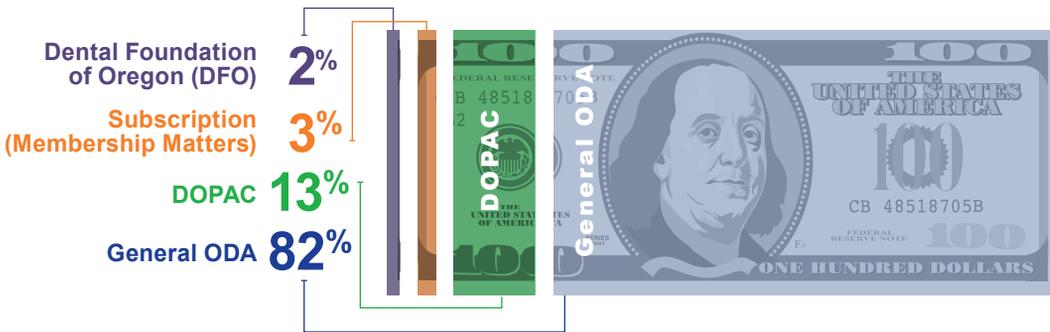
It was an evening of laughter and membership engagement. Members and nonmembers participated and had the opportunity to mingle with colleagues and sponsors as they moved from game to game. There was plenty of friendly competition, and everyone had a great time unwinding and taking part in all the activities. A great time was had by all! 🎮



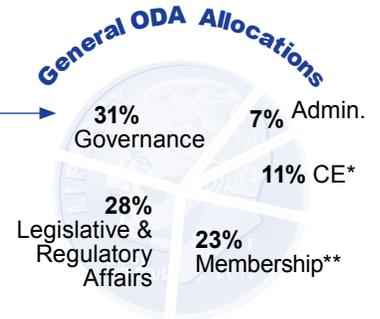
LORA MATTSSEN

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\*Dollar figures are cost approximations based on current pricing and are subject to change.

# Dental Mission Trip to the Philippines

## DEAR ODA MEMBERS,

I hope this letter finds you well! I am writing to share an exciting and meaningful opportunity that I and nine other OHSU DS3s have to participate in this coming spring – a dental mission trip to the Philippines. This trip, organized by the Delta Sigma Delta fraternity here at OHSU School of Dentistry, aims to provide essential dental care to underserved communities in the Philippines.

We are currently seeking support to make this mission possible, and we would love for you to be a part of it. We need dental supplies or any dollar amount to serve about 3,000 patients at our clinic in the Philippines:

- 200 packages of Lidocaine Anesthetic HCl 2% with Epinephrine – 1.7 ml Cartridges, 50/Pkg
- 100 packages of 4% Articaine HCl with Epinephrine – 1.7 ml Injection Cartridges, 50/Pkg
- 10 boxes of 27 Gauge Long Yellow
- 5 boxes of 30 Gauge Short Blue
- 45 boxes of Gloves size small, medium, and large (mostly medium)
- 30 packages Level 2 or 3 masks
- 6 package 5,000/pkg of 2x2 gauze
- 100 Sutures
- Hand sanitizer
- Ibuprofen/acetaminophen

Your support would have a lasting impact on these communities, and any contribution will be deeply appreciated. Every item will go directly toward making a difference. Additionally, if you prefer to donate a dollar amount, we have a tax write off in place to help support you and your business.

If you would like to contribute or need more information, please feel free to contact me at (713) 445-6858 or [roya.moradi798@gmail.com](mailto:roya.moradi798@gmail.com). Be sure to check out our go fund me included below. Thank you for considering supporting this life-changing mission! 🌍

Sincerely,  
Roya Moradi  
OHSU DMD Candidate 2027



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