



Contact Point



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Utah Academy of General Dentistry

Fall/Winter 2004

"In Pursuit of Excellence Through Continuing Education"



Message from the President J.C. Cheney

The Utah Academy of General Dentistry is a strong, vibrant organization. This year we are presenting a total of four CE courses and two mastership courses. Membership grew 12% between the months of May and December last year. We have our web-site up and running. We just hosted our annual golf tournament at the Homestead where 70 golfers participated to benefit Donated Dental Services. We will also be hosting a continuing education cruise next fall. Be sure and plan to join us for this event. We continue to support and present unbiased and economic dental education. We appreciate your support. Please join us at our fall meetings. If you would like to become more involved with the UAGD, please let us know.

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As you may know, there is a group looking to create a dental school in Utah. I have informally polled the UAGD board on this topic and have received responses ranging from strong support to strong opposition. This is a very hot topic and will have a direct effect on our profession and our state. Let me share some of the pro's and con's from the board. The following quotes are from individuals on the board and *not* opinions of the UAGD or myself.

Pro's:

- Continuing Education opportunities would go up and costs could go down, as dental school faculty would live here locally.
- Cost of education for dental students would go down.
- The addition of a dental school would not increase the number of dentists in the state.
- Underserved populations would have increased access to dental care.

Con's:

- 25 dental schools are currently accepting Utah dental students. There are 200 Utahns in dental schools across the country. We already have adequate access to dental schools.
- Dental schools don't make money. This will be a financial drain on the state and the University of Utah. Why spend 20 million or more to create a school if we already have more dentists than we need? Is there a need?
- The financial formula for this is dependent on the government increasing Medicaid payments and there is no indication they will do this. Besides, if they did increase Medicaid payments, the number of dentists who accept Medicaid would go up and increase access for the underserved.

Message continued on page 2 . . .



President's Message continued from front page . . .

And a final comment from one board member, "This is a complex issue. As I get more information my opinion changes back and forth. It is hard to make a decision with limited information."

I strongly urge you to become informed. Talk to people and get answers to your questions. We want your opinions. We want to support you.

Please return this questionnaire to me by fax or email:

- FAX: 801-278-1697
- Email: drjccheney@aol.com

1. Utah would benefit from a dental school:

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

2. The UAGD should play a major role in support or opposition of this:

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

3. I would like to get more involved in the UAGD:

Yes No

Delegate Update

From a national standpoint, the UAGD is doing well. We are well represented and our numbers are strong. However, we can always improve in recruiting our fellow dentists into this great organization. As your delegate, there are some changes I would like to inform you of. As most of you know, we now have a new director, Jay Donahue, who replaced Hal Donnelly last year. We also have a new president, Dr. Tom Howley, who has brought many new ideas to the AGD.

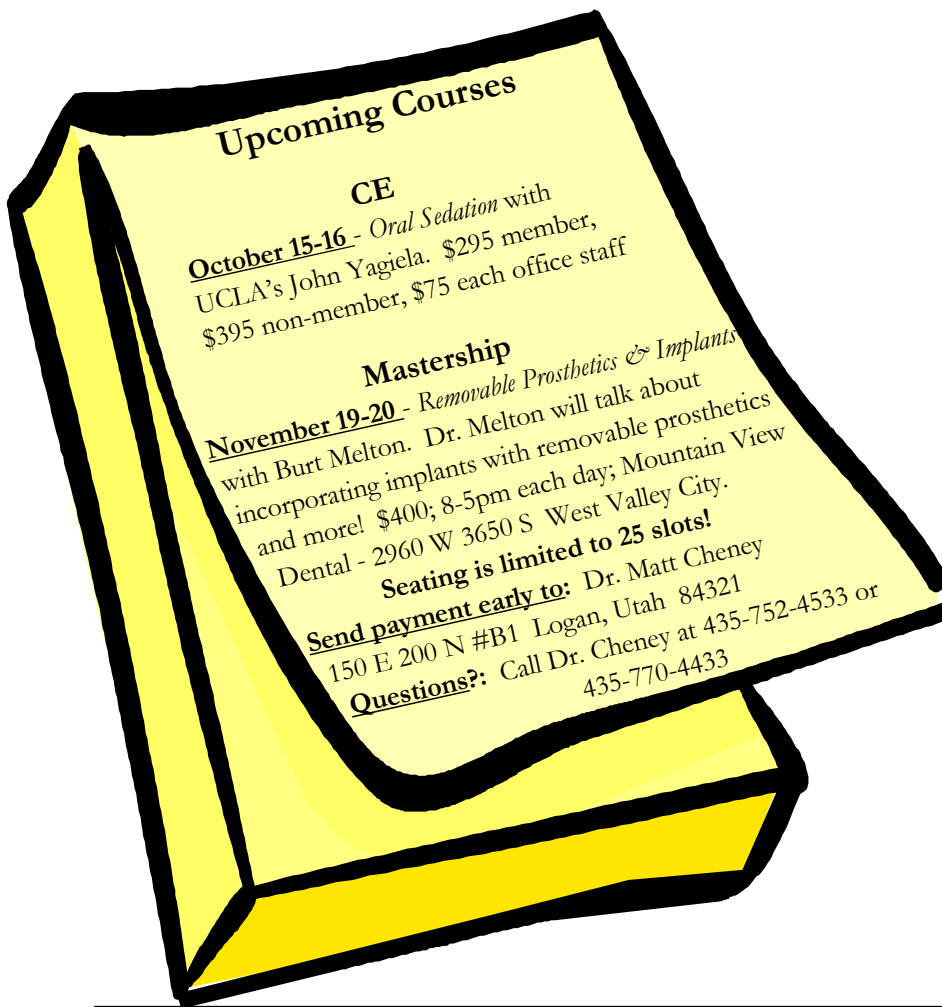
One of the major changes is the requirement for fellowship has changed from five years to three years. As a member of the Exam Council, I can tell you we are striving to make the fellowship exam meaningful. I would encourage any of you that have not taken the exam to do so. It is a challenging and rewarding event. You can now take the test by computer or manually at the annual meeting. The next meeting will be held in Washington D.C. I have not looked at the program, but I know we are trying to have a fellowship review prior to taking the test. More details on this as they become available.

If you have never been to the annual meeting, you need to plan on attending. The class sizes are smaller. The exhibitors are not as busy and are more willing to demonstrate and answer questions. The annual meeting is truly geared for families with plenty of things to see and do in Washington D.C. I would invite all members of the UAGD to schedule time for this meeting.

I also would like to make sure that members of the UAGD get involved in learning about the proposed dental school in Utah. Please get informed and let Dr. J.C. Cheney know how you feel about it. I think we need to have as much input from our membership as possible.

If there is anything I can do for you as a member of the UAGD, please feel free to call 435-752-3343 or fax 435-787-4378. I appreciate the opportunity of being your delegate. Any suggestions, complaints, questions, etc., just let me know.

Daniel A. Boston, DDS



Guest Editorial

Jim Williamson, DMD

Over the past several months, a tremendous buzz has been going through the dental community in Utah about the proposed dental school. My office was flooded with emotional calls from friends and colleagues threatening to leave the Salt Lake District, more particularly the UDA, if this passes. Comments to the effect: "We can't let this happen! It will ruin dentistry as we know it," "We are already flooded in Utah," "Lynn Powell is a communist!" (Sorry Lynn)

I too had an immediate reaction, and I will keep that to myself. But, through the years, I have learned to act and not react. I have learned to keep my cool and keep my emotions in check until I hear all the facts, weigh all the arguments, and see all sides of the issue. We need to understand this first hand in an election year. My father always taught me when making an important, intelligent decision, get all the facts and sort them into pro's and con's in a "T" Square. Therefore, let's examine the facts:

PRO'S

- Helps solve Medicaid problem, increase compensation rates and warrant federal funds
- Educates Utah students in Utah
- Provide CE opportunities
- Provide teaching opportunities

CON'S

- Dental schools are failing nationwide. As Mark Taylor asks, "Why do we feel we can do better?"
- Increase number of dentists per capita
- Lose patients to Dental school
- Increase taxes to Utah tax payers
- Second tier school, no post doctoral programs

What does Medicaid have to do with a dental school? We have approximately 280,000 people in this state on Medicaid. More than 50% of these are children legislation wants taken care of. We have been working with the Utah legislature for years to increase compensation rates for Medicaid patients so we could at least break even, or heaven forbid, make a modest profit. So far, the legislature has turned a deaf ear to our pleas and efforts. Their perception is we are rich dentists and therefore they don't sympathize with us. The legislature is more interested in putting the burden on us the "rich" dentists than on the tax payer. They are looking at other states that divide up Medicaid patients and distribute them among all dentists in an effort to communicate it is time the dental profession gave something back.

Let me side track for a moment. This leads to what I feel is the most important issue in the state: keeping track of the charity we provide. I know personally how much dentists in this state do give. It is huge! We are a very caring, giving profession. My hat is off to all of you. However, we give in secret, feeling that keeping track diminishes the gift or somehow makes it less special. The problem here is we need to let the legislature know we are giving back tremendously! In the case of medicine, hospitals keep track of every sponge in order to get legislative help. I've even heard they sometimes throw things in that weren't meant to be charity. The point is not to blow our own horn, but for important purposes, we need **all** dentists to report how many dollars and hours are contributed each year in dental charity. This is very important.

This may have the appearance of a fear tactic, but it is being considered as a solution. By having a dental school we gain federal funds that otherwise we could not get. It also increases compensation rates that can make it lucrative enough to be seen not only in the schools, but in private practice – theoretically, a good benefit for all.

It is important for all in our profession to have input on this issue. Let's do so with knowledge and wisdom. We need to find all the true facts and make educated decisions. I, like all of you, have my opinion on this issue. I will vote according to what I feel is best and right. In this article, it has been my job to represent all of the constituents and not reveal my bias. The point of this article is to help everyone use wisdom, not emotion in making their decisions. It is also to make a plea for the dental community at large to keep an accounting of charitable hours and contributions and report them to the UDA. Together, we can make an impact on the legislature.

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Golf Success!

We had a very successful golf tournament this year at the beautiful Homestead Resort in Midway. A special thanks to Dr. Kenny Dibble and all who worked so hard to make the tournament possible. It was exciting to see so many golfers, sponsors and prizes! Thanks to everyone for your participation. Plans for next year's tournament are underway . . . Be sure to stay tuned for the details. See you on the course next year!