

Assisting Highlights

Annual Issue

March, 2009

Dental Assistants Week—March 1—7, 2009

*As essential
to your dental health
as your toothbrush*

A certified or registered dental assistant is educated in infection control protocols, exposing and processing radiographs, providing patient education, assisting the dentist during procedures, independently providing intra oral treatment, performing laboratory tasks and much more. As part of the dental team they are essential to the oral care of Canadians! Recognize your dental assistant during the first week of March:

Dental Assistants Week
March 1st to 7th, 2009

Celebrating the essential assistant!



Canadian Dental
Assistants' Association
Association canadienne
des assistantes dentales

www.cdaa.ca 1-800-345-5137



2009 Proposed Salary Guide for Dental Assistants

The 2009 Proposed Salary Guide is enclosed for your review and use. **First we need to apologize!** In the original version of our guide we stated that the 2008 CDSS Fee Guide increased by 9%. We understand that we have misstated that fact, as we have been advised that the CDSS fee guide had an overall increase of 6.86% while some very popular items increased by 9%.

As a history lesson, in 2005 the dental assistants guide increased by "0%"; in 2006 the dental assistant guide increased by 0%; and in 2007 the dental assistants guide increased by 2%. Once the 0-0-2 (which was parallel to SK government employees) was finished, SDAA increased the 2008 dental assistant guide by 3.2% which represented the Consumer Price Index increase of June, 2007.

Additionally, in 2008, SDAA decided that it was time to recommend the advancement of dental assistant wages to be more competitive with Alberta; interestingly we understand that the CDSS had earlier made the same decision relative to the dental 2008 fee guide by taking the steps to become more comparable to Alberta.

So, dental assisting took a quantum leap and in 2009 increased the dental assistant guide by 9%; for a total of 12.2% in the last two years...

Comparatively, the CDSS fee guide increased by 6.86% overall in 2008 and increased by 4.95% overall for 2009. This represents a total of 11.81% in the last two years...

So, where are we at today? There is very little difference in 12.2% and 11.81%; and since the dental assisting guide was adjusted by 0-0-2 in the three preceding years, we suspect that we are more than equivalent. We believe that dental assisting wages in Saskatchewan are still lower than Alberta, but much closer. This and the recent economic recession will go a long way to stop the drain of workers into Alberta.

There are 40 plus open dental assisting positions in Saskatchewan and the dental profession truly needs to attract a greater number of dental assistants. Wages go a long way to address that goal.

So, while we apologize for raising your blood pressure and misstating the CDSS increase, we do stand behind the recommendations made for dental assisting in 2009 and recognize that ultimately, you the employer will make the decision.

- Note that inflation for Saskatchewan stood at 3.4% (June, 2008).
- Shortages of licenced dental assistants continues for many Saskatchewan offices. How did this happen? Wages, quality working environments and the Saskatchewan economy have been significant factors. Additionally, many dental assistants have been drawn to the professions of dental hygiene and dental therapy.
- Fortunately, Saskatchewan is now in the position to draw workers from other provinces. In 2008, 34 new registrants arrived from out of province and we repatriated some former Saskatchewan members.
- As the baby boomers start to retire, employers will face further worker shortages. The profession of dentistry is no exception.
- Dentistry will need to explore options to attract and retain qualified workers who will have their choice of professions and employment. Opportunities might include: clearly defined workplace expectation, higher respect levels for the worker and the work of a skilled and valuable dental assistant, acknowledgement of the contributions made by employees through competitive wages, benefits, a daily "thank you" and give recognition to the "profession of dental assisting" during Dental Assistants Week, March 1- 7, 2009.
- Employers need to value and recognize experience. Dental assistants need continuous feedback; are we doing a good job? Where do we need to improve? Communication and recognition are the key for a productive team atmosphere.
- Employers will also need to provide benefits in order to compete with corporations and unions. Employers who value professional and committed staff must offer salaries to entice and retain these individuals.
- The guide is designed to provide a range of salaries appropriate to different experience levels of dental assistants.
- How can dentists recoup the cost of staff? Dentists need to give dental assistants more responsibility in their skilled areas, based on their formal training. Utilizing your dental assistant to their maximum capacity will enhance their work experience and in turn increase your office productivity.

General Competencies for Dental Assistants in Saskatchewan

Dental Assistants in Saskatchewan are listed with a variety of competencies. Each list is personalized and based on the original training of the individual along with additional formal training that has been completed since graduation. The vast majority of dental assistants hold “core competencies” which are nationally considered to be competency 1 through 13.

Each dental assistant has been provided with a copy of their competency list and may request an additional copy at any time. This will be an invaluable document for you to review during an interview or at assessment time. Individual competency lists have been created because of the variety of competencies taught at dental assistant training programs across the country along with the evolution of dental assistant training courses. If you have a question regarding the specific competencies taught by any school in Canada - our office staff are able to supply you with a competency list for a specific year.

POTENTIAL COMPETENCIES:

- 1 Dental Radiographs, Expose, Process, Mount
- 2 Dental Dam, Place & Remove
- 3 Preliminary Impressions & Bite Registration
- 4 Treatment Liners/Acid Etching/Bonding
- 5 Matrices/Wedges, Place & Remove
- 6 Rubber Cup Polishing
- 7 Oral Hygiene Instructions
- 8 Dietary Counselling
- 9 Fluoride Applications
- 10 Pit & Fissure Sealants & Acid Etching
- 11 Topical Anaesthetic
- 12 Remove Sutures/Surgical Dressings/Retraction Cord
- 13 Desensitizing Agents, Application
- 14 Pulp Vitality Testing
- 15 Polish amalgam restorations
- 16 Fabricate Temporary Crowns
- 17 Amalgam Insertion & Carving
- 18 Perform appropriate medical emergency procedures
- 19 Orthodontic Module
- 20 Temporary Crowns, Cement & Remove
- 21 Provisional Restorations, Place
- 22 Take Plaque Indices
- 23 Elastic Separators, Place
- 24 Restorative Implant Assisting Technology

- 25 Gingival Retraction Cord, Place & Remove
- 26 Coronal Whitening, Perform

Dental assistants have a responsibility to work within their scope of practice. Each dentist/employer shares this responsibility. Competencies may only be practised if the dental assistant is formally trained through an approved course, the treatment is assigned by the dentist and the competency is recorded on the SDAA member's record.

POST GRADUATE COMPETENCIES:

The SIAST Wascana Insertion and Carving of Amalgam Restorations course for licensed dental assistants does **NOT** enable dental assistants to place and finish composite restorations. There are no expanded function dental assisting competencies associated with composite restorations. Additionally, the SDAA Registrar has received verbal complaints about dental assistants “operating a high speed” to adjust composite restorations and to adjust the bite on temporary and permanent crowns. To date the complainants have not been willing to sign a written complaint, however, as a preventative measure the SDAA Registrar has advised the dental assistant, the dentist employer and the CDSS Registrar regarding the unsubstantiated complaint.

Placement of retraction cord training for dental assistants has been well received. Please ensure that if you would like your dental assistant to pack cord that she/he is registered for the next course.

There are also many dental assistants who are not formally trained to place, cement & remove temporary crowns. This course will also be offered this spring at SIAST.

Pending demand, SIAST will also offer the Restorative Implant Assisting Procedures for Dental Assistants. Please ensure that if you currently offer implants or plan to offer implants that your assistants have completed this program and have the necessary competencies added to their personalized list.

Please be reminded that dental assistants in Saskatchewan **cannot scale**. This skill has been protected in the Dental Disciplines Act for dentists and dental hygienists.

Unlicensed employees cannot call themselves dental assistants. Their activities are limited to suctioning and retraction.

Competitive Insurance Programs for Dental Office Staff



CDAABenefit Program

www.cdaabenefits.ca/plandesign.html



The CDAABenefits Program offers competitive rates and covers all the important features of financial security should tragedy occur.

Job Board Update

- SDAA listed 208 dental assistant positions (at no cost to the employer) on our job board during 2008. Of this, 168 positions were filled and 40 remained open at year end.
- The SDAA Job Board can be accessed via our website at www.sdaa.sk.ca. The SDAA office staff is pleased to work with you to find valuable new employees.
- The Job Board allows any Dental Practice to advertise current openings at no charge.
- To post a position, go to the SDAA website, click ca-
reers and click "Job Board". An on-line form can be entered and submitted directly from the website, or a posting form can be downloaded with the use of Adobe Acrobat Reader and faxed to our office for posting. If you are not online—phone our office with the information on your position. Our staff will be pleased to assist you.
- Dental Assistants from within Saskatchewan and surrounding provinces visit our website and our service has worked well for many offices.

"Respected, Responsible, Educated Healthcare Professionals"



The 2009 Annual Register of Dental Assistants is enclosed. Please review this document carefully to ensure that the dental assistants in your employ are currently licenced, and also determine if they hold a practising or non practising licence.

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