

Hanette Gomez: From Dominican Republic To Queens County Dental Society President

By Marc Katz

Dr. Hanette Gomez believed she was living the American dream when she was able to open her own dental office in Corona, followed by a second location in Howard Beach, after immigrating from a small coastal town in the Dominican Republic. But that dream was further amplified earlier this month when she was installed as the new president of the Queens County Dental Society.



QCDS President Dr. Hanette Gomez

"As a first-generation immigrant, I never imagined that I would be in a leadership position at the Queens County Dental Society," she said. "Holding this position will be one of the most rewarding and biggest challenges of my life..."

The installation of Dr. Gomez and her slate of officers took place virtually at a Zoom CE program titled "Dentistry in 2022 and Beyond." Taking office with her were Arthur Feigenbaum, president-elect; Pratix Shroff, vice president; Jayesh Trivedi, secretary; and Mitchell Greenberg, treasurer.

Named ADA delegates were Rekha Gehani and Jay Ledner. Selected as NYSDA delegates were Rekha Gehani, Mitchell Greenberg, Prabhakar Koppikar, Prabha Krishnan, Jay Ledner, Robert Shpuntoff, and Richard Yang.

ICDE officers elected were Eric Huang, president; Lawrence Lehman, vice president; and James Kouzoukian, secretary/treasurer.

Dr. Gomez said she will ask Board members to reach out to others they know in the field and ask them to join QCDS, NYSDA and the ADA. "It isn't enough to just maintain the QCDS membership as it is now, during these difficult days. We must work to increase our reach, our membership."

She said, "Board members should be contacting dental students they meet and asking them to join QCDS, as well. They should be answering the question: 'What's in it for me?' They should be telling all of the benefits of membership in organized dentistry."

She said she once had a patient who had a daughter looking for a job. She gave the young girl a position in her office and that became the start of her career in dentistry. She is now studying to be a dental hygienist.

Dr. Gomez began her dental studies at the Universidad Autonoma de Santo Domingo, known as the first university of the New World; founded in 1538. After coming to the United States in 1984 she continued her studies at New York University, and

became licensed to practice in New York and Florida in 1990. She continued her studies after earning her D.D.S., pursuing a two-year program in orthodontics at the Light Force Institute and a two-year program in implantology and prosthetics at NYU. She trained in reconstruction implants, and aesthetics and occlusion.

She has been an active member of QCDS, holding a number of officer positions, in addition to being an involved member of the ADA and NYSDA. Dr. Gomez has also served as the president of both the Hispanic Dental Association and the Dominican Medical and Dental Association. She also belongs to the Academy of General Dentistry, the International Congress of Oral Implantology, and the New York Society of Forensic Dentistry.

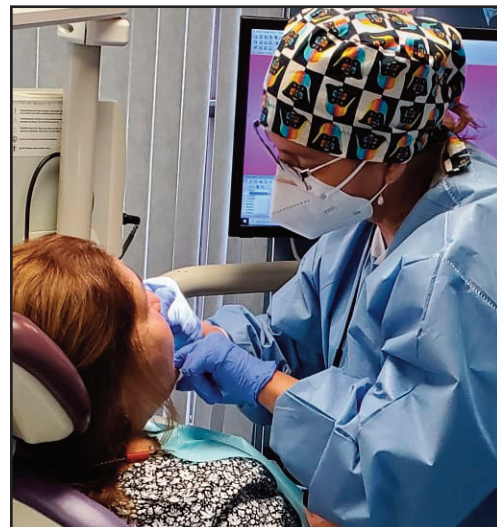
With training in forensics, she volunteered extensively to help identify victims of the World Trade Center attack on September 11, 2001 through the use of dental records. She volunteered for nine months working at the New York Medical Examiner's office, after working her regular office hours. She set up a database with information obtained from other dental records, and compared findings attempting to make matches and identify victims. "Sometimes we only had one tooth to work with to identify someone, but it was extremely rewarding when we did make a match," Dr. Gomez said.

She did similar work following the crash of TWA flight 587 in Howard Beach on November 12, 2001. She said it was "extremely moving" when she was able to identify someone she knew who was on the flight, she recalled. "It was very emotional to see. We used dental records, x-rays, photos, and computer information to make matches," she said.

Dr. Gomez received a fellowship award from the International Congress of Oral Implantology "for working diligently and volunteering her time for over nine months" in

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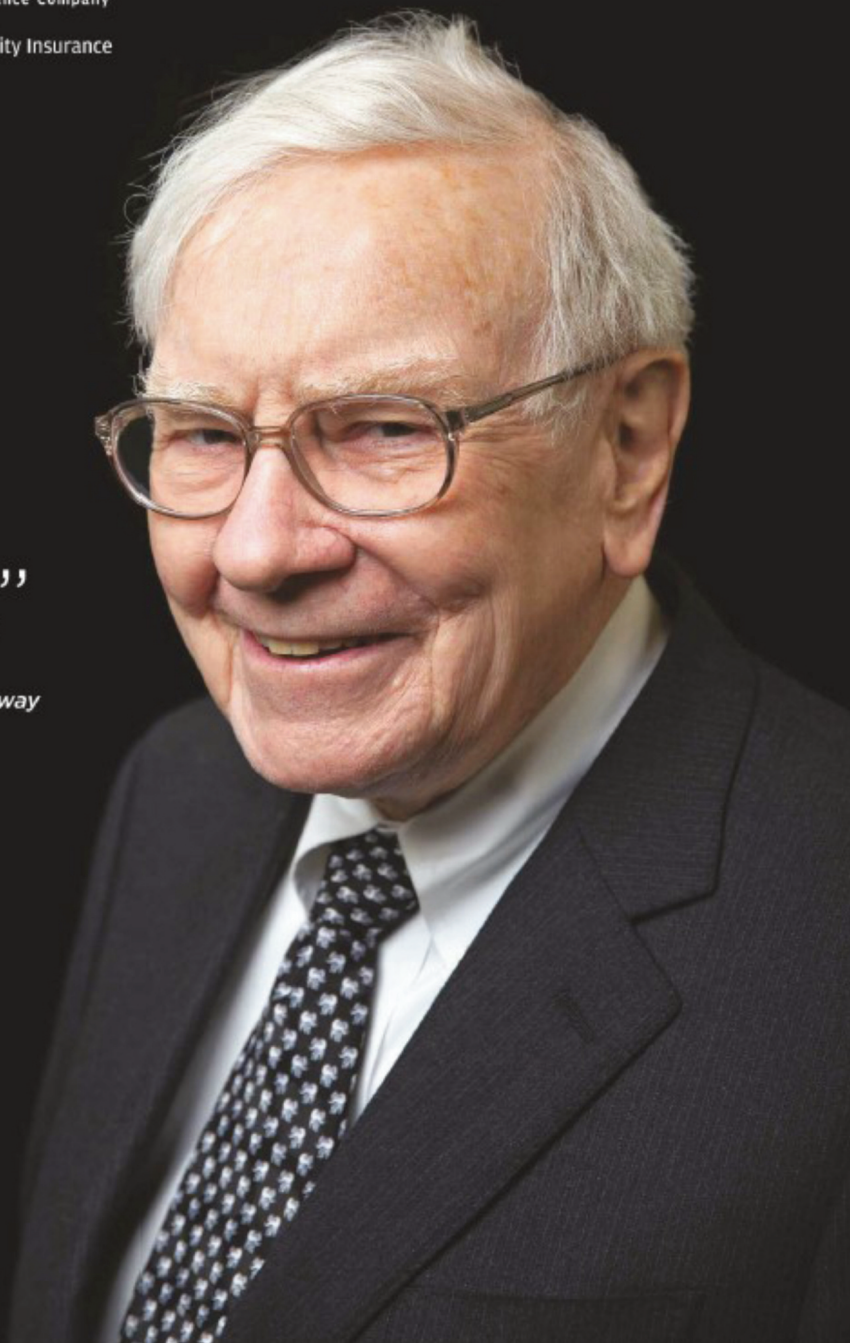
Dr. Hanette Gomez at work on a patient in her Queens office.



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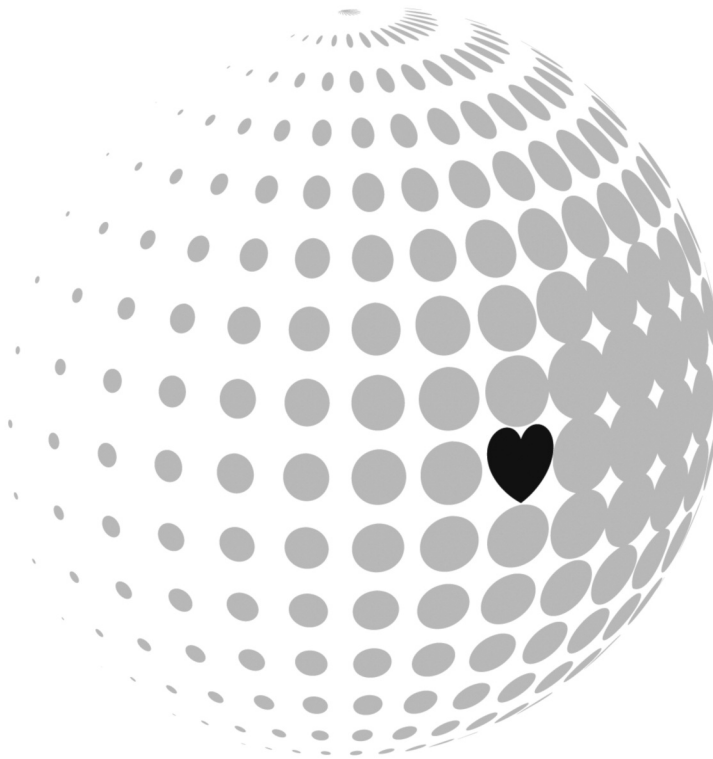
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For more information about advertising, contact the Business Manager at 86-90 188th Street Jamaica NY 11423 or call (718) 454-1020. Inclusion of an advertisement does not imply endorsement of any firm, goods, or services unless such endorsement is specifically stated.

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From the President

hanettegomezdds@gmail.com

The Road, The Time, The Challenges

By Dr. Hanette Gomez

I am very proud and honored to have been elected president of the Queens County Dental Society for the year 2022. I am grateful for the trust given to me by the membership. I thank all for the opportunity to serve my society, my community and my profession.

When I arrived in the United States as an internationally trained dentist, I was a single mother to an infant and a toddler. I faced many challenges: a language barrier, culture shock, motherhood, work, and going back to school to pursue a dental license to practice dentistry in the United States. Life was not easy, but with dedication and perseverance I was able to obtain my license and open my own dental practice.

I thank God for helping me find the strength and for all the blessings received throughout my life, including my family and friends. I thank my husband and four children for giving me the opportunity to be the best mother I could possibly be and for being so understanding of all my time commitments. To my parents in heaven, I am grateful for their love, support and guidance. I would also like to send a special thanks to Dr. Chad Gehani for his leadership and to my mentors, Dr. Mercedes Mota and Dr. Arelis Santana.

As a first-generation immigrant, I never imagined that I would be in a leadership position at the Queens County Dental Society. Holding this position will be one of the most rewarding and biggest challenges of my life, especially during this time of uncertainty in the world. Things are getting tougher and tougher, but working together will make us effective and powerful, enabling us to build a strong foundation for the future of this organization. I encourage all of our Board members to bring new energy, ideas and efforts to not just make us thrive, but be stronger than ever. I know if we all put the interests of our membership first, QCDS will be able to rise to a much higher level. Diversity is what makes us strong and the Queens County Dental Society has the most diverse membership of any dental organization in the country. If our organization is going to succeed, we must continue to bring in diverse groups and welcome dentists from all ethnic backgrounds.

Each year the Queens County Dental Society hosts a variety of continuing education courses, as well as other events. Over time, the Board and the Educational Committee has implemented new ideas, brought us new dynamic speakers and presented intriguing lectures. This past year was a tough one, but thanks to our executive director and our past president,

Dr. Arelis Santana, our society was able to overcome many obstacles and achieve a very successful year. Because of their hard work, The World's Fair of Dentistry for 2021 succeeded beyond all expectations. And, we will continue to have lectures that will attract the interest of our membership and educate us about new technology that can challenge us, elevating the way we provide services to our patients.

Increasing membership will be a priority during my term as your president. I, as president, want to create an atmosphere where everyone feels welcome and wants to be part of QCDS.

I also hope to reinvigorate our community services. Within our working communities, we can host dental screening events, educate children about oral hygiene and nutrition, and participate in career-day panels for middle schools, high schools and colleges.

I ask our members to stay connected. We should be proud to be QCDS members. With membership comes responsibilities for all of us to help create the kind of society that will support and stand up for us. I want to encourage our members to register for all the courses being offered by the Society throughout the year and to participate in educational and community events being given.

Once again, I would like to thank the membership and the board for their trust and support. I look forward to working with you in the year ahead. My door—and my ears—will always be open to welcome you and listen to your suggestions.

We are all pursuing the same goal: to bring the Queens County Dental Society to a higher level. Let's share our experience, knowledge and time to achieve that goal.

*If our organization
is going to succeed,
we must continue
to bring in diverse groups
and welcome dentists
from all ethnic
backgrounds.*

Contacting QCDS?

Note the new QCDS
headquarters phone numbers:

Phone: 718-454-1020 Fax: 718-454-1061

Email: QueensCountyDentalSociety1@gmail.com

Website: www.QCDSdental.org



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*You will no longer be receiving
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The IRS shut down their electronic filing for personal income tax returns and corporate income tax returns on November 20, 2021. It will not open again until about February 1, 2022. This means if you are filing a personal return or corporate return in the interim, you must file on paper and mail the returns in.

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ADA Trustee Report

learyp@ada.org

'Lifting' Needed for Organized Dentistry

By Paul R. Leary, D.M.D., Second District ADA Trustee

I would like to begin by saying "Thank You!" During the holiday season it is important to take the time to slow the pace down to consider the path we are following. That path starts with family—and there is no better place to start—who give us the very best reasons to pursue a meaningful and successful career.

And then there is your staff, assisting you in the delivery of the care we are all so proud of.

And, thank you to our local society and its amazing and dedicated staff, and every volunteer who chooses to support our profession beyond the call of running a practice. They work every day avoiding the hurdles between us and all the forces knocking at our doors while we concentrate on what we do: delivering care.

We are working together to watch the many issues that confront us and doing our very best to support the mission of guarding the gates to advance the practice of dentistry, in all its forms, and deliver the best level of care to patients who trust us to deliver exactly that.

You may ask, "How could I contribute to supporting my profession?" It begins with spending the time to read what is happening around you right now. Every effort, even the smallest, adds to the gains we all feel. Welcome a new dentist in your area to a meeting or something as simple as saying hello to a new face has the effect of warmth. There are so many issues that every practicing dentist faces every day, most appreciated by those who spend time in the same foxhole. The practice of dentistry is not easy. In a spirit of wellness and community, the net that supports us is only as strong as each thread that holds us together. Your membership in this profession is as critical. You may feel overwhelmed by the concept of adding another responsibility to the long list you currently have. I assure you, without exception, those who extend themselves are paid back in many ways that money could never buy. You are part of this great circle, look at the dedicated members who seem to be so happy to be in each other's company. The common denominator in all of this is that we are all dentists. This is recognized within this state even in licensure. New York State licenses dentists, without separation into specialty. Those are defined more broadly within our governance structures, yet this state feels the practice of dentistry combines all. I only bring attention to this because united we remain a very strong group. We are delivering the very best oral healthcare to those who trust us to deliver just that. Our profession is defined specifically

by a code of ethics and practicing by that code establishes the foundation of what we aspire to do in the delivery of the very best care we can manage.

Nationally, your ADA has been actively keeping our resources spread over many issues. Third party payers, contracts and all things related to reimbursement is listed by many in our membership as one of the most significant issues affecting our doctor-patient relationship and what influences payers have on the setting of claims for delivering that care. Two councils at the ADA, the Council on Dental Practice and the Council on Dental Benefit Programs, concentrate specifically on the many issues facing us as dentists. They are consistent in their advocating for the best policies to keep our members in front of these issues to the best of their ability. We must be diligent in our actions not to violate FTC regulations in recommendations about leverage working with providers.


Advocacy in legislation remains a fantastic member benefit. With all the difficulties experienced during this pandemic, the success of our arms in Chicago and Washington helped us realize gains what would never have been possible by any small group or individual when working out the rules and regulations following the signing of legislation. The best example of this was working out the language around PPP loans that originally were signed for an eight-week provision. We were still closed eight-weeks after the initial closure, so we could not have justified using any of these disbursements for payroll. Artful negotiation and advocacy landed provisions in the regulations that extended this period to 26-weeks or the end of the year 2020. This simple adjustment provided great relief to all members who will probably pay two to three lifetimes of dues simply for this single adjustment made to existing legislation. I could go on all day describing other gains, but please understand the ability of those great professionals who support us every day to provide us with a benefit that far outweighs the cost of membership every day.

I will close by wishing you all the best the new year has to offer, for your families and everyone you hold dearest. I look with great hope to the world that waits for us in the coming months and years. If you do even the smallest of lifting in support of our profession, it will help make this profession the envy of all. People will then stop asking, "Why do I join?" and replace that with "How could I have not joined."

“

*Advocacy in
legislation remains
a fantastic
member benefit.*

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Here's How to Protect Your Professional Privileges And Reputation in the Internet Age that We Are In

By Amy Kulb, Esq. and Jill Kulb, Esq.

We all live in the internet age in which the ready access to information online can be a positive tool in marketing and growing a practice. Electronic resources can increase the ease and efficiency with which many tasks can be performed, including all of the credentialing that is now essential for the livelihood of health professionals. Understanding this landscape and exercising caution are essential to avoiding pitfalls.

Social media is a powerful tool in its positive and negative ramifications. There have always been specific professional conduct regulations on advertising professional services that are set forth in section 29.1(b)(12) of the Rules of the Board of Regents. There are issues beyond that regulation, such as HIPAA and patient privacy concerns that can lead to professional misconduct charges and other potentially costly and damaging consequences.

The following are examples of "nevers" in advertising and any social media.

- Do not advertise that you provide services beyond the scope of a dental practice. For example, Botox or fillers are not limited to dental conditions.
- Do not use the words "specialist" or "specialty" unless appropriate.
- Do not make claims not backed by scientific data or established as a standard of care.
- Make sure any affiliations are compliant.
- Make sure advertising does not give guarantees or claims of superiority or content that is otherwise misleading.
- If using images of patients or quotes, make sure you have proper releases and never include confidential or negative patient information.
- Familiarize yourself with HIPAA through educational materials such as online or live seminars, articles and the HHS website.
- Censor your social media content and be mindful of posting images or language that you do not want to be seen by the public.
- If legal guidance is needed, consult an experienced attorney, and do not rely on a marketing service that may not be famil-

iar with state law or professional standards.

Negative information posted about you on the internet can be extremely damaging. The following are some basic suggestions:

- To help avoid patients posting negative information, use good practice management skills
- These comments, "reviews", etc., can be seen by others and potential patients, as well as your colleagues
- OPD investigators and other regulatory and law enforcement agencies can also view this content and open cases and investigate any non-compliance or alleged misconduct.
- Periodically google your name or use resources, such as "Me on the Web" to identify and address any false or negative content.

In the internet age, your responses to questions on credentialing applications are no longer relied upon for privileges, such as enrollment in insurance or managed care networks or employment by or privileges at a hospital or other health care facility. Rather, all of the above review your current National Practitioner Data Bank report, as well as government websites, such as the

Office of Professional Discipline, the Office of the Medicaid Inspector General and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Information in the NPDB can also pique the interest of the Office of Professional Discipline and lead to an investigation. Data reported to the NPDB includes the following:

- Penalties imposed by a State Board,
- Sanctions imposed by State Medicaid Programs, Health and Human Services and insurance/managed care terminations for cause,
- Awards in malpractice cases, including small claims court, that are paid for by your professional liability carrier.

The NPDB does send notice to the licensee of all reports that it receives. However, it is recommended that all dentists self-query the NPDB annually. This will enable you to see the report that is being reviewed in connection with all credentialing, as well as to address any errors in reported information with the entity that reported it. The existence of the NPDB, as well as all of the government websites, further reinforces why it is essential to engage experienced counsel at the outset of any OPD, OMIG, audit, malpractice or any matter that can result in professional consequences.

The wealth of information that is readily accessible in the digital age can have a powerful impact upon professional lives. Being mindful of your "content" is an essential tool in protecting your hard-earned professional privileges and reputation.

“
...it is
recommended
that all dentists
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annually.
”

Contacting QCDS?

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Amy Kulb, Esq. and Jill Kulb, Esq., are members of the firm Jacobson Goldberg & Kulb, LLP.

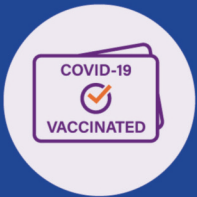
More information on the new policy on private sector COVID-19 vaccination requirements for business owners

Beginning December 27, all workers in New York City who perform in-person work or interact with the public in the course of business beyond a quick and limited purpose will be required to show proof of their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Workers will have up to 45 days to receive their second dose of a two-dose vaccine. Covered businesses are required to exclude from the workplace all workers who have not met this requirement, with the exception of individuals who have requested reasonable accommodations for medical or religious reasons by December 27. For a full list of covered businesses, requirements, and exemptions, go to nyc.gov/vaxtowork.

Here is a helpful checklist to make sure your business is prepared for this new policy:



- **Familiarize yourself** with covered businesses, requirements, and exemptions.



- **Have a plan in place** to maintain worker vaccination records and process reasonable accommodations. Covered businesses are responsible for collecting proof of vaccination and securely maintaining records. Your plans should also include a process for determining whether workers are eligible for a reasonable accommodation.



- **Be prepared** to make your records available for inspection upon request by a city agency.



- **When you are in compliance**, sign the NYC affirmation and place it in a clearly visible area of your business. **Businesses must sign and post the affirmation no later than December 27.** You can download the affirmation form at nyc.gov/vaxtowork.

For more information on this policy, please visit nyc.gov/vaxtowork.

If you are a small business with further questions, you can also call NYC Small Business Services at (888) SBS-4NYC (888-727-4692) for assistance understanding and implementing this policy.



The Dental Auxiliary Training Center: Providing Trained Dental Assistants for the Profession

Over the last 40 years, dental assistants have been in very short supply. The most serious shortage of dental assistants exists today. If you have tried to find and hire a new dental assistant, you have learned it is not an easy or pleasant experience. Experienced and trained dental assistants are not readily available.

In 1985, Dental Auxiliary Training Center (DATC) founder Lisa Lyle recognized the need for trained dental assistants and joined forces with the New York State District Dental Societies to create local adult evening programs for dental assistants. The objective of DATC is to reach out to communities to find women and men who are interested in the profession of dental assisting and provide local training in classes held at the district dental society headquarters. DATC has been and continues to work with the Queens County, Second District, Ninth District, Nassau, and Suffolk County Dental Societies.

The question of why there is always a shortage can be answered simply if you look at the history of dental assisting. Dental assisting is not viewed as a “profession,” as is dental hygiene. There is no required training for a dental assistant, and dental assistants are generally hired and trained on-the-job. The lack of any formal training has allowed the salary of a dental assistant to be traditionally low, in many cases at minimum wage. For most dental assistants, minimum wage does not allow them to provide for their families, and they often leave the profession for a better paying job.

The duties and responsibilities of a dental assistant require much more than on-the-job training. A dental assistant that is trained by an employer-dentist learns “how to do things,” but rarely has the opportunity to learn “why they are doing them.” The lack of formal training leaves serious inequalities in the important knowledge base of the dental assistant to be able to perform his or her duties to the best of their ability for both you and the patient. If someone were to randomly test multiple on-the-job trained dental assistants, they would find the knowledge base to be extremely inconsistent, as well as inadequate.

To be a dental assistant one must, first, love what they do. In addition, they must be mature, responsible, motivated, interested in dentistry, and willing to learn. Hiring someone off the street and expecting them to arrive with all these qualities is somewhat ambitious, and then attempting to teach them all they need to know to be able to assist is a herculean, if not an impossible, challenge. As a result, on-the-job trained dental assistants come and go.

As dentists, your role and responsibilities are to elevate the “profession” of dental assisting, or the problem of finding a quality dental assistant will never go away. If you hire someone off the street, you should consider providing formal classroom training to augment what you are teaching them in your office. Formal training will benefit you, as it will greatly improve your in-office training and speed up the performance of your dental assistant.

Collectively, as dentists, you need to reach out and en-

courage young women and men in your community to enter the “profession of dental assisting.” Dental assistants must have a great outgoing personality and like to help people. Prospective dental assistants can be found in local cafes, banks, corner stores, retail shops, or perhaps even as a patient. Talk to that person you already know about dental assisting and invite them into your practice to see and observe what a dental assistant does. If they are interested, give them the opportunity and send them for formal classroom training.

Treat and pay them well, give them a future career and plan. As you already know, your dental assistant is one of the most important employees in your practice.

This is a problem for the dental community to solve. Becoming proactive in helping yourself is a solution that has been needed for many years.

About the State Optional Dental Assistant License

In New York State, dental assistants can be licensed by the New York State Education Department, Office of the Professions. The license is optional and has been available to dental assistants since about 1996. It is not mandatory for a dental assistant to become licensed unless they are performing any of the tasks found at <http://www.op.nysed.gov/prof/dent/dentasst.htm>. Without the New York license, a dental assistant may not perform any of the tasks on the list. Read all of the information carefully.

The DATC program is not a licensing program, it is a skills program to provide skills for:

- Students who are interested in entering or re-entering the career field,
- Already employed dental assistants who have no formal classroom training,

Working dental assistants who are interested in preparing to take the DANB Exam, part of the requirements for the New York State License. DATC offers a unique pathway only to DATC graduates who choose to become licensed once they become employed in the profession and fulfill all of the requirements to take and pass all three parts of the DANB Exam. Most dental assistants are not licensed in New York State. As of July 2021, there are 1,573 licensed dental assistants out of about 26,000 practicing dental assistants in New York.

The Dental Auxiliary Training Center believes that quality training in dental assisting skills can lead to a successful and rewarding lifelong career. DATC has successfully trained thousands of dental assistants and many who have become employed in practices. DATC appreciates all student referrals. All DATC programs are designed to help students learn the theory, skills, duties, and procedures needed for employment in a dental office or clinic, as well as to develop the habits of lifelong learning needed in the job market.

Visit the DATC website, <https://www.datcny.com> or call 914-564-3774 for further information.

The next offering of DATC’s popular “Fundamentals of Chairside Dental Assisting” class will start in March and be repeated in October.

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Hanette Gomez: From Dominican Republic To QCDS President

—Continued from front page

identifying the two sets of victims. It was presented by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner of the City of New York.

In addition to her forensic work, twice a year she collaborates with members of the Dominican Dental Association to provide free dental care to residents of her native country. She is also an ambassador for the Drug Free War Organization, which educates youth on addiction prevention. She also volunteers with the Mustard Seed Organization, which was founded to support housing and care for abandoned children with special needs in third world countries. Dr. Gomez participates in a movement that provides free dental care to veterans, too.

"I would like to see QCDS members become more active in the communities they serve," she said. "We should be the ambassadors promoting good dental health and oral hygiene. We can—and should—host dental screening events, educate children about oral hygiene and nutrition and participate in career day events in middle schools, high schools and colleges.

In a message to the membership in this edition of the QCDS Bulletin, she said, "We are all pursuing the same goal: to bring the Queens County Dental Society to a higher level. Let's share our experience, knowledge and time to achieve that goal."

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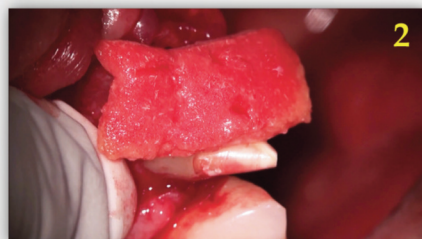
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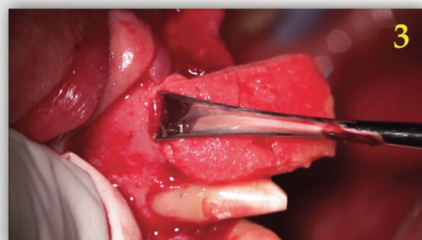
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1. Spivak 1990; 2. Ricci 1992; 3. Valen 2002

Clinical images courtesy of Robert Miller, MA, DDS, FACD, DABOI

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