



ALABAMA
ACADEMY of
GENERAL DENTISTRY

SUMMER 2018

Composite

Dedicated To The Concerns
Of General Dentists In Alabama
Official Publication of the Alabama Academy of General Dentistry





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Editor's Notes

Bill Chesser, DMD, MAGD

THE OPIOID CRISIS AND DENTISTRY

The opioid crisis in the U.S. has been declared a public health emergency by President Trump. We dentists, as an important link in the national health care team, must be aware of our part in addressing this problem.

In 2015, there were 33,000 deaths related to the use of opioids – a 23% increase from just the previous year. Some researchers estimate that this epidemic – which involves both health care and loss in productivity – produces losses amounting to \$75 Billion in annual expense.

We have all had encounters with “Doctor-Hoppers” who drop into our offices from out of town, with tales of various tooth problems which can only be helped with Percocet. Each of us must use due diligence in dealing with these RED FLAGS.

Sales of opioids have **quadrupled** between 1999 and 2010. **The number of deaths caused solely from opioid abuse exceeds the total number of deaths from suicide, motor vehicle crashes, cocaine and heroin use COMBINED!**

Several factors lead to this abuse of opioids. **Marketing by pharmaceutical companies** is one part of the problem. **Lobbyists** working in state legislatures were instrumental in deterring legislatures from enacting limitations on prescription of opioids.

Dentists account for **8-12% of all opioid prescriptions**. However, dentists usually prescribe lower strength meds, as well as fewer dosages. Typical directives would be for 10-20 pills over a 2-5-day period for acute or post-operative pain,

Our national media has been keen to interview recovering opioid abusers—some who claim they began their addiction after having wisdom teeth extracted. Though I believe this is an overstatement, it nevertheless affects our profession negatively.

Use of the **Practitioner Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP)** can be a huge help to us when monitoring our patients’ opioid use history. This is an online database which houses prescribing and dispensing data for patients in any state. This site allows the doctor to know when a **parent** obtains multiple prescriptions from different practitioners.

Google PDMP to utilize this valuable tool.

The AGD has issued the following statement on the role of dentistry in opioid abuse: (Access the AGD White Paper on the AGD Web Page, under “Advocacy”.)

The dosage and duration of each prescription to the same patient must be considered in any assessment of the effect of dentistry on the epidemic of opioid abuse.

Assessments of the causation of opioid addiction based solely upon the number of prescriptions written results in an overestimation of the dental profession’s role in opioid addiction.

It is nonetheless incumbent upon the profession of dentistry and all dental associations to support and further the education of dentists and dental staff members, and the public to recognize the indicators of and likelihood of opioid addiction, and understand, consider, and utilize alternative pain management strategies.

President's Message

Derrick Mendez, DMD



AGD HILL DAY 2018 – ADVOCACY IS NOT JUST FOR LOBBYISTS

As an organization focused on continuing education, it's important not to forget that the Academy of General Dentistry also places high importance on advocacy. While there are many policy issues important to dentistry as a whole, there are certain issues relevant to the *general* dentist in particular that the AGD is uniquely positioned to advocate for. Most of us have heard it before, but the mantra is still true – if you're not at the table, you're on the menu.

“As an associate dentist, you may not be responsible for payroll or making sure your building lease is paid every month, but you *are* responsible for protecting your profession, and by extension, protecting the public you pledged to treat.”

Let me stress, if you are an associate dentist who works for a practice owner or corporate entity, *you are not protected from the negative consequences of what would occur if our voice were to diminish on Capitol Hill.*

When I was asked by the Legislative & Governmental Affairs Council to represent Alabama at the 2018 AGD Hill Day, my immediate reaction was one of intimidation. While I had some experience through attending the National Dental Student Lobby Day in Washington D.C. several years ago, I certainly consider myself no expert in matters of legislation and public policy. However, I remember from my experiences as a student that our senators and representatives actually seem to appreciate that. They meet with professional lobbyists on a daily basis – it's refreshing to them to actually meet with a genuine, real member of their constituency.

Fortunately, for those less experienced members such as myself, we spent the good part of the first day of AGD Hill Day in a workshop designed to prepare us to discuss the issues. After a welcome message by national AGD President Manuel Cordero, several individuals rose to brief us on the items we were to discuss with representatives from our respective states the following day. First, we were to request support for various oral health literacy initiatives as well as stress the importance of continued HRSA Title VII funding. We were also armed with talking points in case we were asked about how AGD was responding to the opioid crisis. Towards the end of the program, we heard from U.S. Representatives Mark Meadows (R-NC) and Mike Simpson (R-ID).

The next day following our training workshop, I met with the offices of two U.S. Representatives from our state to discuss the aforementioned issues: Mo Brooks (R-AL 5th District) and

Gary Palmer (R-AL 6th District). If you have a person connection with either of them, please let them know we appreciate the time their office took to speak to the AGD. I was also honored to accompany Dr. Rocky Napier to two of his meetings with U.S. Representatives from the state of South Carolina.

Simply by being a member, you help support the AGD's advocacy efforts through events like AGD Hill Day. However, I encourage you to take an extra step and look out for Action Alerts from the AGD via email. These are opportunities to contact your local representatives in support of or in opposition to upcoming votes that impact dentistry. If you are interested in taking part in events like AGD Hill day, I invite you to contact an AGD Legislative & Governmental Affairs Council member, me, or any other Alabama AGD leader to express your desire to be involved. The AGD wants you to be at the table!

2018 AGD Hill Day Agenda

- Issue 1: Action Needed to Increase Oral Health Literacy
[2-3 sentence summary description here]
- Issue 2: Support Funding for Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Oral Health Programs
[2-3 sentence summary description here]

More to come????



The 149th Annual Session of the Alabama Dental Association convened June 5 at the Orange Beach, Alabama, Perdido Resort. The recently-formed concept of this becoming a regional conference has been clearly evident this year. The GCDC hosted attendees from several states, as well as Canada!

The focus of the GCDC has always been to promote clinical growth and success for the entire dental profession. General Dentists, specialists, hygienists, dental students, and the entire office team are involved.

This year's meeting provided **70 hours of quality CE** to promote clinical and practice growth, with lots of social activities for networking and camaraderie. The GCDC provides the perfect mix of business and pleasure on the most beautiful beaches in the world (Editor's Opinion).

Dr. Gordon Isbell, III, ALDA President, is to be congratulated for this well-planned and perfectly executed event. Gordon floated many innovative ideas for the 2018 Session. Perhaps paramount among them was his decision to appoint 2 Co-Chairmen for each position on the Annual Session Council. This allowed chairmen to share responsibilities on the Exhibit Floor, Registration, Entertainment, etc.

Dr. Mike Edwards and Dr. John Barnes shared the job of



ALDA President, Gordon Isbell III, presides at the House of Delegates during the GCDC.

Co-Chairs of the Annual Session Council. Our dear friend, former ALDA Past-President Bill Ingram commented that, with Gordon, Mike, and John in charge, you had the "Triumvirate" of dental meeting planners in the state! Each of these men have been Chairs of Annual Sessions many times in years past.

A new event this year was a Wednesday night "Kick Off" Pool Party, allowing attendees to mingle with old friends, have a light supper after a long day of travel, and meet new friends. Live music, free hors d'oeuvres and beer, and even wine were provided. A bang-up evening!

We were proud to have over 75 Exhibitors this year, all booths sold out! Our Thursday night Exhibitors' Party was a blast, with plenty of door prizes for dentists, staff members, and Exhibitors. Free food and drink, as well as amazing popcorn, were provided.

The culmination of our week of CE, fun, and beaching was held on Saturday night, when everyone celebrated the President's Party. As I can bet the case for outdoor events anytime, the gala had to be moved indoors due to possible bad weather. Hey, the AC felt great, the band was fine, food was amazing! At 9 p.m., we all moved outside to enjoy an amazing fireworks show, and all were thoroughly entertained.

Kudos to Dr. Isbell, his entire planning team, and the ALDA Staff, for their outstanding GCDC. Be sure to make note on your 2019 calendars for the GCDC June 4-9, 2019, with Dr. Stacy Gardner as President.



Receiving 50 Year Membership in ALDA certificates (L) Dr. Bill Wright, Tuscaloosa and Dr. Charles Tatum, Praterville

MENTAL CONFERENCE



Proud family with the new ALDA President. With Dr. Gardner (L) is mother Martha Jean, dad Dr. Lyldon Strickland and husband Dr. Steve Gardner. Lyldon is a past president of the ALAGD and ALDA. Steve is the treasurer of our chapter of AGD.



Dr. Jeffery Cole, ADA President Elect, presents the ADA pen to ALDA President Gordon Isbell.



Dr. Gordon Isbell congratulates Dr. Stacey Gardner after being installed as ALDA President for 2018-19.



Most Excellent Fellow Awards presented to (L-R) Matthew Litz, Art Steiniker, Tim Brooks, and John Barnes.

2018 GULF COAST DENTAL CONFERENCE



(L-R) Executive Director Gary Myers, Executive Secretary Angie Gilliver, and President Derrick Mendez conduct the business at the ALAGD Board meeting.



Cindy Isbell and Steve Gardner getting photos of their respective spouses for posterity.



We have never had an ALAGD officer to be married while serving. Here is ALAGD President Elect Ross Isbell and wife Stephanie finishing their first dance at the wedding. They then joined his dad Gordon at the Gulf Coast Dental Conference.



Dr. Steve Gardner has assumed the position of Treasurer of the Alabama AGD.



Proud parents Martha Jean and Lyndon Strickland watching daughter Stacey Gardner being installed as President off ALDA.



Dr. Bill Ingram, always exhibiting sartorial excellence, shows off his new utility belt.

2018 AGD Scientific Session

As fate would have it, the AGD National Scientific Meeting was held in New Orleans during the same week as Alabama's Gulf Coast Conference. As a result, our state only had a small number of representatives in attendance. The rest of us were gathered at Orange Beach.

Two Alabama dentists received their Fellowship Awards, while one person earned a Mastership, and two people attained Lifelong Learning and Service Recognition status.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Dr. Toni Neumeier. As Past-President of the Alabama AGD, she attended the New Orleans meeting and obtained appropriate photographs of our many awardees.

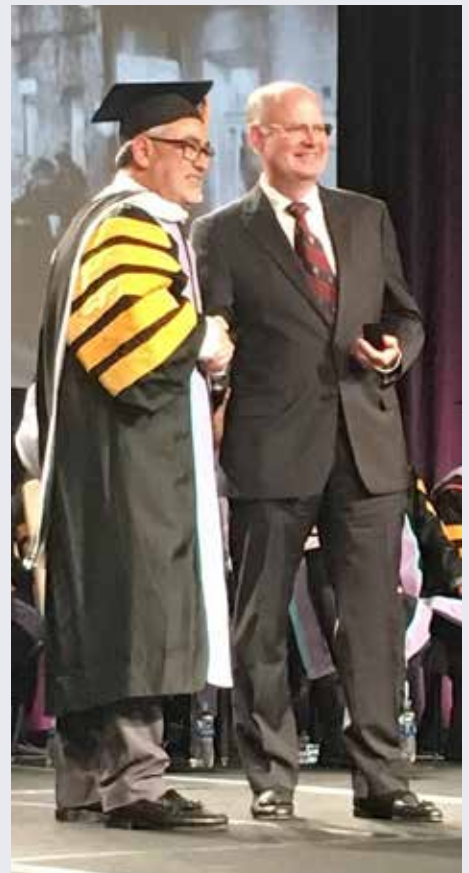
On this page, you will find pictures of almost all of our state's honored dentists. Unfortunately, we were unable to obtain a photograph of Dr. Mark P. Kuglitsh, from Homewood, AL. A hearty congratulations is due each one of you for these honors. We are very proud of you!



(L-R) Dr. Toni Neumier, Dr. Wendy Holder, Alexander City, and Dr. and Mrs. David Skees, Sneed, Alabama. Dr. Holder received the MAGD Award and Dr. Skees, a past president of ALAGD, was awarded Lifelong Learning and Recognition Award.



(R) Dr. Jack Smalley, Tuscaloosa, received the Fellowship Award.



Dr. Harold Bullard received the Lifelong Learning Service Recognition Award.



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