



SPRING 2019

Tennessee Dental Safety Net Denture Program

For the past couple of years, the Tennessee state legislature has supported a prosthodontics program. The Tennessee Dental Safety Net Denture Program provides low-cost dentures and partials to working-age Tennesseans (ages 18-64) with state funding subsidizing a significant portion of the costs.

Delta Dental of Tennessee believes this program is critical to the citizens of our state. With the new proposed work requirements for TennCare recipients, these individuals need to be able to find adequate work. For many of our fellow Tennesseans, poor oral health inhibits their ability to chew and speak properly, not to mention their self-confidence and the ability to smile for a job interview.

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Interfaith Dental Clinic patient Marvin shows off a beautiful smile after receiving low-cost dentures from the Tennessee Dental Safety Net program.



Your Patients and Opioid Use – Best Practices

As health care providers licensed to provide prescription medications, it's up to you to educate yourself about safe and responsible prescribing, as well as identify potential abuse by your patients.

Opioids are commonly prescribed by the medical and dental professions to relieve pain, but there is a widely publicized opioid epidemic. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), out of the 63,632 lethal drug overdoses in 2016, opi-

oids accounted for 42,249 deaths (66 percent). The CDC also advises that overdose is not the only risk related to prescription opioids. Misuse, abuse and opioid use disorder, or addiction, are also potential dangers.

As prescribers of opioids, dentists and the dental profession have a role in preventing their misuse. As the nation's leading dental benefits carrier, covering more than 75 million Americans and offering the country's largest dental network with roughly

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Dental Safety Net ctd.

According to a Harris poll conducted on behalf of the American Dental Association, more than one out of three low-income adults avoids smiling. This number is likely higher for Tennesseans as our state ranks among the bottom for oral health. Tennessee is one of only three states that do not offer dental benefits as part of Medicaid.

Through the Tennessee Dental Safety Net Denture Program, more than \$1.25 million has benefitted over 2,300 Tennesseans to date. One way you can help is to contact your state elected officials and urge them to keep this program going. They need to recognize

the value it brings to your community. In many cases, patients who have benefited from receiving affordable dentures have gone on to live healthier lives and even get better jobs.

The program is administered at no charge by Delta Dental of Tennessee's Smile180 Foundation and is available through many of the charitable dental clinics throughout the state. For information on clinics supported by the Smile180 Foundation, visit DeltaDentalTN.com and click on Smile180. They all need dental professionals to volunteer to help their patients, and it's a great way to give back to your local community.

Opioid Use Best Practices ctd.



153,000 participating dentists, Delta Dental recommends the following guidelines to better manage the prescribing of opioids:

- When considering prescribing opioids, dentists should conduct a thorough medical and dental history, including documentation of current medications taken.
- Dentists should consider treatment options that utilize best practices to prevent exacerbation of, or relapse of, opioid misuse.

- Dentists should consider using alternative treatments such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) which are effective in relieving postoperative dental pain, have fewer side effects and less potential for abuse compared to opioids.

- If opioids are prescribed, the dose and duration should be for as short a period as possible. Dentists should follow CDC guidelines, such as the lowest possible effective dosage and start with immediate-release opioids instead of extended-release/long-acting opioids.

Take time to have a discussion with your patients (and their parents when appropriate for younger patients) about the risks and complications of any medications prescribed, including opioids. It's important to remind the patient about responsible storage and disposal of prescription opioids and the potential for misuse and abuse. Giving them safe disposal instructions

for their local communities should help ensure unused medications are not misused or improperly disposed. Ultimately, you know your patients best, and they are more likely to listen to a healthcare provider they trust when given advice on how and when to use opioid medications.

Be sure to review the CDC guidelines often, as they are subject to change, as well as your State Licensing Board recommendations for safe opioid prescribing.

Smile180 Volunteer Spotlight

Dr. Jaimin Surati: Interfaith Dental Clinic

Dr. Jaimin Surati did his AEGD (Advanced Education in General Dentistry) residency at Interfaith Dental Clinic in Nashville, Tenn., and has been a volunteer there since finishing his residency in 2016. He took the time to answer some questions about his experience, and we have shared his answers here.



Q : Do you have a story to share about a patient (or patients) who touched your heart?

A : As a previous resident at Interfaith, there are so many patients that have made a difference in the way that I do dentistry. Those patient interactions have helped lay the foundation for the way I practice, as well as assist patients with their dental health. The patients you meet while at Interfaith are very remarkable. They are excited to have the opportunity to improve, happy to be there, and always thankful for your service!

Q : Could you speak about watching the patients progress in their oral health?

A : Interfaith places great emphasis on self improvement. This carries over to the patient conversations, motivating and encouraging each patient on ways that they can also improve their oral

health. These small words of encouragement or home care gems, really make a difference. Patients show a tremendous shift in their ideas of dental health as they progress through their treatment. It is amazing to watch the change, especially as patients begin to realize what a huge difference they've made since beginning their journey.

Q : What would you say to a dentist who was considering coming to serve patients in need?

A : Do it! Being at Interfaith is so rewarding, and having such a great staff to guide you through your first time makes it even more so. The staff is amazing and fun to work with! The patients are wonderful! Interfaith has made the whole process so simple; it is guaranteed to be one of the most fulfilling and rewarding experiences you'll have!

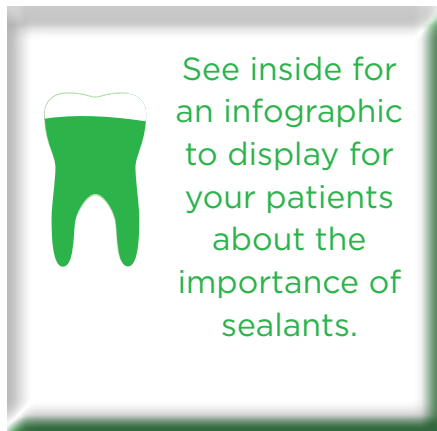
2019 Delta Dental Scholarship Recipients Named

The University of Tennessee Health Science Center College of Dentistry held a dinner honoring its scholarship recipients in March, and included among them were six future dentists who received scholarships from Delta Dental of Tennessee for outstanding academic achievement and leadership qualities.

Front Row (Left to right) – Kimberly Taylor, D-2; Mustafa Alwan, D-2; Cameron Togrye, D-3; Kathryn Boyd, D-3

Back Row: (Left to Right) – Heath Phillips, D-2; Jeff Ballard, CFO, Delta Dental of Tennessee; Dr. Phil Wenk, President and CEO, Delta Dental of Tennessee; Alexander Hagar, D-3; Dr. James C. Ragain Jr., Dean, UTHSC College of Dentistry





Coming Soon – A New Dental Office Toolkit

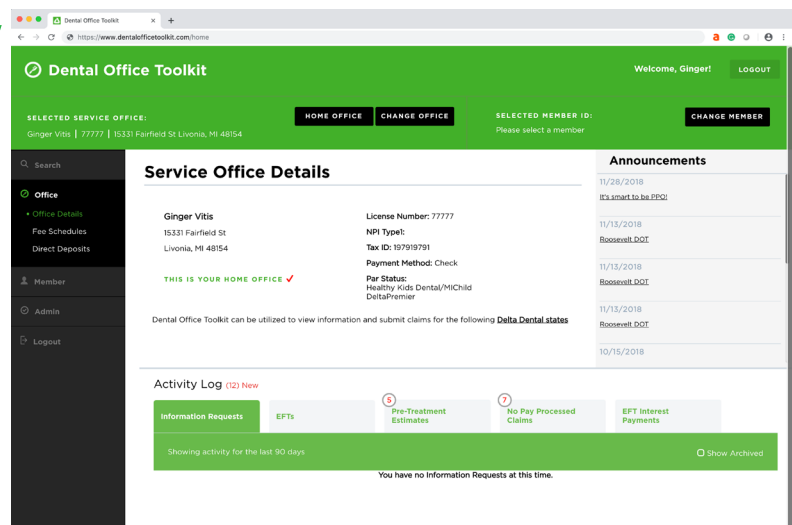
With a fresh look and streamlined functionality, the Dental Office Toolkit® (DOT) will change how you run day-to-day office operations. The new DOT hits provider offices this summer!

Some new DOT features will include the ability to:

- Set your home office as the default for each session
- Toggle between different offices and members
- Search comprehensive family claims history across all businesses
- Manage user roles and permissions for your staff

Delta Dental's Dental Office Toolkit is an online tool that empowers provider offices to perform day-to-day tasks such as submitting claims, looking up member benefits and updating office information – all without having to call customer service. This saves you valuable time and lets you address needs faster.

Now is a great time to get started in DOT – we're creating training videos, how-to guides and other resources



es to help your office get set up for success. Be on the lookout for those resources in the coming months.

Whether you're a longtime user or new to DOT, we're here to help! Check out the DOT Summer Release video to see what's in store: <https://youtu.be/QWu0btDnoEw> or scan this QR code.

