



Message from the President

April 16, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Bob Dylan said, “the future for me is already a thing of the past.” That is so true of this COVID-19 pandemic. There have been times when the board has made a decision and only hours later, we have to adjust the decision to fit the ever-changing data that is coming out from the ADA, CDC and the Governor. Based on some of the models Connecticut is expected to peek in virus diagnosis at some point between now and April 30. The data is fluid and the recommendations change every few days.

I would like to share this passage with you from the President of the American Association for Orthopedic Surgeons:

“The burning question is: when will we be able to perform ‘elective surgery/dentistry’ including dental prophylaxis, and get back to taking care of our patients? The short answer is no one knows. What we do know, is that timeline will likely be different for different parts of our country. Additionally, the return will be staggered with ambulatory cases and less complex cases starting earlier. The key is that these decisions will be made locally, dependent on local conditions and resources. I am certain, that when we do get the ‘all clear’, we will all be happy to be back taking care of patients.”

The CSDA Board continues to meet weekly and evaluates the most current information to guide you, the members, and the profession of dentistry here in Connecticut. I am in constant contact with the UCONN School of Dental Medicine for their thoughts on the situation and to help guide us. The CSDA staff remains committed, working from home (practicing social distancing) to get you the information you and the Board needs to help guide us all. We rely on the professionals at the ADA and CDC for updates with regards to PPE and practice guidance. In addition, Dr. Gehani, President of the ADA, has set-up a Task Force charged with creating guidance for reopening practices when it is safe to do so. As soon as those recommendations are released, we will share them immediately with you. And finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention our ADA First District Trustee, Dr Rich Rosato. He has joined us on two CSDA Board conference calls sharing the ADA updates with us so the staff can synthesize the information and get it to you. Please note we are all committed to you, working hard for you, the members, so you may make the best decisions for your practices.

Our top priority is the health and well-being of the public and our members, now during the pandemic and always. Connecticut dentists have abided by the Governor's "Stay Safe, Stay Home" campaign and have provided care to those in need of [urgent/emergency care outlined and recommended by the ADA](#). Recently, Governor Lamont extended the closures, distancing and safety measure guidelines through May 20, 2020. The Governor is in discussions with several other Governors in the Tri-state and New England areas in determining the best way to ramp up going back to work and the economy, while practicing continued social distancing.

Although the CSDA strongly urges dentists to limit their practices to urgent and emergency dental care at this time, we recognize that there is no state mandate that requires that limitation. However, dentists do need to practice ethically by using sound clinical judgement especially in this environment, utilizing appropriate PPE as defined by the CDC, and providing a safe environment for their staff and patients.

In consideration of these and other important issues, the CSDA Board of Governors has revised its policy statement regarding dental practice during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Resolved, that the CSDA Board of Governors strongly urges that the Connecticut dentists cancel all elective procedures, and only provide emergency/urgent care as defined by the American Dental Association; be it further

Resolved, that in support of Governor Lamont's "Stay Safe Stay Home" distancing and safety guidelines The CSDA Board of Governors, after careful consideration has determined it will align with the Governor's recommendations and continue this strong recommendation through May 20, 2020; be it further

Resolved, that this policy shall be revisited to accommodate further developments regarding COVID-19 and further actions/recommendations from the ADA or government agencies as needed.

To be clear, although dentistry is on the list of "essential businesses" in the Governor's "Stay Safe, Stay Home" executive order, the intent of the CSDA is for all dentists to follow these recommendations and **cancel elective and routine care including hygiene, and only treat urgent/emergent dental issues.**

ADA Task Force for Post-Pandemic Dental Practice Recovery

The ADA has created a Task Force for Dental Practice Recovery, which is charged with developing recommendations to preparing members to reopen their practices. It is expected that the Task Force will present their recommendations to the ADA Board of Trustees by the end of April. The Task Force is meeting at least twice a week and is addressing a number of questions and concerns that members have as they plan to re-enter practice, including:

- **Supply of PPE:** The ADA has no authority over supply production or distribution, and therefore recommends that each individual dentist contact their personal distributor, perhaps daily, to secure whatever supplies are available. There is no overarching strategy to access needed PPE, as the pinch point is supply vs. overwhelming demand. The ADA reminds members that the FDA has approved the use of KN95 masks in place of N95 masks during the shortage, but they should be purchased through authorized dealers. [Click here for the list of the authorized dealers on the FDA website.](#)
- **Updated CDC Guidelines** will also be a part of the Task Force recommendations. Although the CDC guidance is expected to change, the [CDC's Interim Infection Prevention and Control Guidance can be found here.](#)

In-Office COVID-19 Testing

One of the primary issues related to COVID-19 testing is whether it is within the scope of practice. The ADA says that administering the test is already within the scope of dentistry. This medical test is necessary to screen patients properly in order to provide appropriate and necessary care, similar to blood pressure.

The ADA will advocate for acknowledgement of the test being within the scope of dentistry, and that dentists need to be considered “on the front-line” and therefore getting the tests for their practices.

The ADA is also working on billing issues and dentists being credentialed for medical insurance. The ADA Code Revision Committee met and passed two new codes to be used when tests are administered (one for antigen testing, one for antibody testing). Whether third-party payers will reimburse, and how much, is anyone’s guess, but was not discussed as it is not within the purview of the Committee.

The ADA cautions members to wait for feedback from the ADA regarding availability and accuracy of the tests before jumping to purchase. The most useful tests will be immediate result, point of care tests, but they are not widely available at this time.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Teledentistry

In a previous COVID-19 update, I noted that an Executive Order to allow dentists to practice teledentistry was requested. We have learned from the Department of Public Health this week that their attorneys are currently working on telehealth waivers/executive orders allowing dentists to use telehealth. We will continue to keep our members updated on this front and let you know as soon as an executive order is issued.

Current information on other legislative/regulatory activities related to the COVID-19 pandemic can be found on the CSDA website at www.csdacom/member-section/LegislativeInitiatives. Issues include license renewals, x-ray registrations and continuing education during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

ACTION ALERT Small business relief programs in trouble

During this time of considerable economic uncertainty, the CSDA must be engaged in small business advocacy. The Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA) has alerted the CSDA that the Federal loan programs designed to help small businesses survive the coronavirus pandemic are in trouble.

The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), launched April 3, has run out of money—with just 4% of Connecticut small businesses approved for these critical loans. With dental offices across the state running out of time, the U.S. Congress is deadlocked over adding more capital to the program, and applications for another vital emergency funding source, the Economic Injury Disaster Loan program, were suspended after it ran out of money.

Take a moment to reach out to Connecticut's Congressional delegation, and tell them to do the right thing by Connecticut's hard-hit small businesses.

Please act today and contact both Senator Richard Blumenthal (202.224.2823 or [use this email form](#)) and Senator Chris Murphy (202.224.4041 or [use this email form](#)).

Also, contact your U.S. House Representative:

- Rep. John Larson (CT-1): 202.225.2265 | [email](#)
- Rep. Joe Courtney (CT-2): 202.225.2076 | [email](#)
- Rep. Rosa De Lauro (CT-3): 202.225.3661 | [email](#)
- Rep. Jim Himes (CT-4): 202.225.5541 | [email](#)
- Rep. Jahana Hayes (CT-5): 202.225.4476 | [email](#)

Although the curve may be flattening in some areas, this pandemic and its repercussions on our profession are far from over. We should all be proud of the service that we all are providing our communities in the COVID-19 fight. Rest assured, that as we devote our efforts to battle COVID-19 locally, the CSDA and ADA, are fighting equally as hard on a state and national level to assure that we get the relief we deserve. In addition, the CSDA is completely aligned with all specialty societies in its advocacy efforts and our entire profession is speaking with one voice on Capitol Hill on behalf of our patients. As I always say, the CSDA staff continue to work tirelessly for you the member. You are continuing to see first-hand the value of your CSDA and ADA membership and know you are appreciated. In the end, I ask you to please remain calm, cool, collected and informed as possible.

Your teams, families and communities continue to need you to lead them. There is no handbook for a situation like this, and we appreciate all of your support, as you are the foundation to our great organization.

Finally, permit me to reiterate, please, constantly check the following websites for information updates:

www.csda.com/coronavirus

www.ada.org/virus

www.cdc.gov

portal.ct.gov/dph

I hope that this update covers the concerns that many of you may have. As always, we will work on these and additional issues, and keep you updated on our progress. Feel free to contact me at president@csda.com, or any of our hard working CSDA staff members, if you have any comments, questions or concerns.

Please stay safe and stay healthy.

Very truly yours,

Albert Natelli, DDS

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