

Dentistry's bright green future

by Ivana Ridzon Yazbek, Nova Southeastern '05, pre dental member

As a dental student, you probably wonder about the future of dentistry and how your career will unfold. Where and how will you practice? What will patients demand of you? As the generation that grew up with fast-paced technology, it makes sense that we start preparing now to practice in a changed world.

Enter the Eco-Dentistry Association. The EDA is the go-to resource for students and dental professionals who want to practice in a sustainable and more profitable way. The EDA was founded in 2008 by the husband-and-wife team of Dr. Fred and Ina Pockrass⁶. According to the Journal of Practical Hygiene, the Pockrasses created the country's first green dental office in 2003 and earned the "Green Business" certification from The Bay Area Green Business program^{4,7}. The EDA provides green dentistry teaching resources, green certification programs for dental offices and dental products, and a platform to connect green dental patients to us and each other. An all-digital office is the green dental office of the future⁸.

We choose dentistry because we want to be healing professionals. But most

practices today have a huge environmental impact. According to Dr. Farahani and Suchak's study at the University of Waterloo, roughly 30 percent of U.S. dental practices use digital imaging, which results in the dumping of 4.8 million lead foils and 28 million liters of toxic X-ray development chemicals every year². Much of this toxic waste ends up in our local water streams and over-flowing landfills. Instead of throwing away 680 million plastic barriers and 1.7 billion paper and plastic sterilization pouches every year, dentists can use FDA-approved, reusable cloth methods, just like they do in the country's best operating rooms². According to the Environmental Protection Agency, dental offices contribute 3.7 tons of mercury waste to our waterways¹.

Articles on green dentistry have appeared in dental publications ranging from Dental Products Report to the Journal of the Academy of General Dentistry. On the ADA's 150th anniversary, it issued "150 Ways to Go Green," an online resource that offered tips to integrate environmentally sound initiatives into our practices, like using amalgam separators to capture mercury-waste⁶.

The University of the Pacific, Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry is incor-

porating high-tech and green methods. The dental school will relocate to a new home in the SoMa district of San Francisco in 2014. Highlights of green initiatives already instituted at the Dugoni campus clinic include digital charting, scheduling and X-rays; phone-generated appointment reminders and paperless kiosk check-ins; iPads for patient education instead of paper handouts; digital impressions; re-usable cloth gowns in lieu of disposables; and re-usable burs, endodontic files and other materials³.

Kristen Hann, Pacific '12 and EDA member, is urging the school to implement more eco-friendly ideas into the school's clinic. With help from Pacific's ASDA chapter, they want the clinic to replace plastic barriers and disposable sterilization methods with reusable options. Hann also is working to get the school to use stainless steel impression trays and suction tips, items that can be autoclaved and reused, instead of dumped in the landfill after one use³. These simple methods reduce waste and pollution, and can save a dental practice roughly \$2,400 a year, according to a study by Natural Logic of Berkeley, Calif.⁵

The EDA is welcoming student members. Your \$29 membership includes the members-only Weekly Action

Items with the latest green tips. You'll also become a part of the growing community of dental students committed to practicing in a way that's good for our patients and the planet. The EDA offers speakers who can come to your school and help it be part of dentistry's green future. **E**

References:

1. Environmental Protection Agency (2011). Mercury in Dental Amalgam. Retrieved Jan. 26, 2012 from <http://www.epa.gov/hg/dentalamalgam.html>
2. Farahani A., Suchak M (2007). Eco-Friendly Dentistry. The Environmentally-Responsible Dental Practice. Retrieved Jan. 25, 2012 from http://www.ecodentistry.org/resource/resmgr/docs/eco-friendly_dentistry_jcda.pdf
3. Hann K. (2011, Dec. 29-30). Telephone interview.
4. JPH. Creating an Environmentally Sound Dental Practice, A Discussion with Fred Pockrass, DDS and Ina Pockrass, JD. Journal for Practical Hygiene 2007 Nov/Dec; 21-22.
5. Kordlesch N. (2007). The Economic Savings of Eco-Friendly Dental Practices. Retrieved Jan. 25, 2012 from <http://www.ecodentistry.org/general/custom.asp?page=naturallogic>
6. Pockrass F, Pockrass I., Lentini M. (2011, Nov. 9). Telephone interview.
10. The Bay Area Green Business Program. Available at: www.greenbiz.ca.gov. Accessed Jan. 25, 2012.

Spotlight

Lessons from a lifetime of service

by Griffin Sonstegard, Minnesota '13

"They learn that one of the greatest things in the world is giving back."

That's what Dr. Irvin Silverstein shared on Dr.Bicuspid.com when he was asked what volunteers in San Diego gain from providing free oral health services to the underserved community. Dr. Silverstein's past is filled with removing barriers to care, guiding students and ultimately, improving oral health care as a whole.

Dr. Silverstein graduated from Northwestern Dental School in 1978, then attended a hospital-based residency program at the UCLA Medical Center. A few years later, he took part in a periodontal residency program at USC. He also obtained a Master's degree in education and teaching credential there. With this formal training behind him, Dr. Silverstein moved to San Diego where he opened a private periodontal practice.

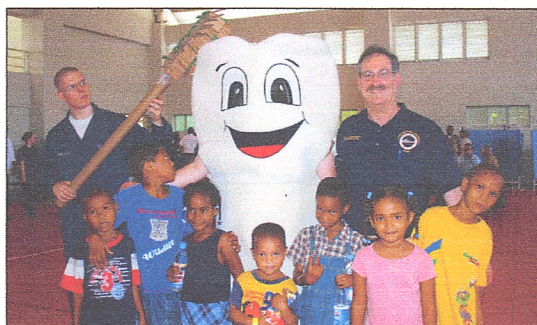
Dr. Silverstein's commitment to dental service reaches back to his days as a dental resident. After he finished his hospital-based residency in Los Angeles, Dr. Silverstein helped start a residency program for special-needs patients with dental problems at the USC County Hospital. Throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, Dr. Silverstein mentored students throughout San Diego. In 2003, he was told about the

fledgling program he is now most well-known for: the University of California, San Diego Student-Run Free Dental Clinic Project.

The UCSD Student-Run Free Dental Clinic Project is no ordinary free dental clinic. Providing free service at three locations in San Diego County, the clinics are managed and run by undergraduate college students while volunteer dentists perform the dental procedures. Between 2004 and 2010, the UCSD Student-Run Free Dental Clinic Project boasted the following statistics: 10,400 patient visits, 1,941 clinic sessions, 6,580 dentist volunteer hours and 50,145 student volunteer hours. The students and dentists who volunteer their time and energy to this clinic project provided \$4 million of free dental work to San Diego's underserved community. This group also partners with the U.S. Navy since 2006 and the U.S. Air Force since 2011 to provide oral health care internationally. Ultimately, the clinic project teaches dentists and students the importance of giving back both locally and abroad.

"If every professional would volunteer and give back four hours per month," Dr. Silverstein says, "we could make a significant dent into the barriers to care problem without raising taxes and without federal controls."

Dr. Silverstein and the UCSD Student-Run Free Dental Clinic Project received



Dr. Silverstein on an outreach mission in the Dominican Republic, April 2009

two ADA Golden Apple Awards and the ADA Access to Care Award. In 2009, the Alpha Omega International Dental Fraternity awarded Dr. Silverstein the Trudi Birger Award for Volunteerism and shortly thereafter the California Dental Association Foundation awarded him its 2010 Humanitarian Award.

Dr. Silverstein exemplifies what can be done to address the dental needs in communities. He feels that his greatest award is that many of his 400 students who have gone into dentistry are volunteering in their communities.

Across the nation, breaking down barriers to oral health care is a constant struggle. As programs and policies emerge to address this issue, good, honest, volunteerism cannot be discounted from being one of them. While Dr. Silverstein's past am-

bitions exemplify ideals of servanthood and possibilities for growth of oral health professions, one hopes his services will no longer be seen as unique. Let them become the norm. Then Dr. Silverstein will not only be heralded for his past specific services, but also revered as one of the forefathers, a true steward of oral health, who completely altered dental professions. **E**

This year the UCSD Pre dental Society NGO will be going on the USNS Mercy hospital ship to Indonesia, The Philippines, Vietnam and Cambodia. Dr. Silverstein is looking for volunteers in the health care and engineering fields. If you are interested in joining his international team of volunteers please e-mail him at: dsilverstein22@cox.net.