

Dental Assisting

A Challenging and Rewarding Career



AUSTRALIAN DENTAL
ASSOCIATION INC.

An information guide to your career options in Dentistry

Introduction

The dental profession is evolving rapidly and the role of the Dental Assistant offers an opportunity to get involved in this rewarding part of the healthcare arena.

Your **dental assisting** career starts here.

Whether you choose to work full time or part time, in public or private practice or with a general or specialist dentist, you will play a key role in the dental team and have the opportunity to deliver high quality dental care and a positive experience for your patients.

Your Role

Dental Assistants are involved in all areas of a dental practice and have the opportunity to develop a range of skills and experience which can be used to build a rewarding career in Dentistry.

You will be involved in three main areas of expertise:

Administration and Reception

Dental Assistants are the face and voice of the practice and are often the first point of contact with patients. If you have good communication skills and enjoy using these to create a helpful, reassuring and friendly atmosphere for your patients then you will find this part of the job enjoyable and rewarding.

As a Dental Assistant you will be trained in reception, administration and other aspects of patient service. You will provide key support within the practice scheduling appointments, providing telephone assistance, dealing with patient enquiries and maintaining records. Another part of this area of responsibility may also be liaising with representatives of dental material supply houses and co-ordination of supplies purchasing.

Chair-side

This is where your communication skills and desire to work with patients can really add value to the practice. Through a calm, caring and methodical approach you will be able to put patients at ease and help them to relax prior to examination.

In some cases you may help them by demonstrating oral hygiene techniques that they can use at home to prevent further dental damage.

The other side to this vital chair-side role is the assistance you provide to the Dentist by mixing materials for fillings, maintaining a 'dry field' in the patient's mouth during treatment and passing instruments. All this helps the smooth running of a consultation, making the patient's visit more comfortable. These activities may also not be restricted to the dental clinic. Assistants can be required to provide their skills outside the surgery in operating theatres, mobile clinics and nursing homes.

Preparation

Infection control is extremely important in all dental practices for the protection of patients and dental workers. Dental assistants play a central role in ensuring that proper standards of infection control are maintained through 'behind-the-scenes' cleaning, sterilising and preparation work.

Your Career Path

After several years of dental assisting experience, your training and skills will open up opportunities that are wide and varied.

Here are some of the paths your career could take:

Dental Assisting

Further training can be undertaken for dental radiography, oral health education and the more advanced provision of assistance during procedures under general anaesthetic and sedation. These opportunities can be accessed through the National Competencies Standards.

Practice Manager

This is a new and developing role within dental practices which frees-up dentists to concentrate on clinical practice. It may require further training and can involve paying accounts and wages, managing the IT system and the management of other staff in the clinic.

Dental Hygienist

Dental assisting can often act as a spring-board in to becoming a Hygienist and is often a pre-requisite of dental hygiene courses. In fact a number of Dental Assistants have gone on to pursue the much more lengthy training to become dentists.

Further Information

To find more information on careers in Dental Assisting
visit the ADA website at:

ada.org.au/dentalassistant

Australian Dental Association Inc.

PO Box 520

St Leonards NSW 1590

Tel: 02 9906 4412

Fax: 02 9906 4676

www.ada.org.au

