



Introducing the Canadian Association of Hospital Dentists

Ontario Dentist interviews Dr. Susan Sutherland, Chief of Dentistry at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre

OD. What is hospital dentistry?

A. Hospital dentistry is the intersection of medicine and dentistry. Hospital dentists provide comprehensive dental care for patients with special needs and complex medical conditions who cannot safely be treated in community dental practices. Integrated generalist and specialist dental care provides unique expertise for patients with complex or unusual oral-facial conditions. Working collaboratively with medical/surgical colleagues, hospital-based dentists provide critical support for trauma, cancer, cardiac, transplant and many other hospital programs that treat patients from local and distant communities.

In addition to providing highly specialized care for patients with medically complex conditions and special needs, dentists in teaching hospitals (academic health sciences centres or AHSCs) also provide hospital-based training in many dental specialties for dental students and residents from the affiliated university, and may carry out clinical, biomedical and population-health research.

OD. What is the Canadian Association of Hospital Dentists (CAHD)?

A. CAHD is the national voice of dentists who are affiliated with Canadian hospitals. Our **vision** is “Shaping the future of hospital dentistry.” Our **mission** is to promote the highest standards of evidence-based oral health care, advance dental education in AHSCs, encourage collaborative research, and advocate for access to care for Canadians with complex needs who require dental care in hospital settings.

OD. Why was CAHD created?

A. Dentists in hospitals work in complex, dynamic, data-driven and changing environments. The demands they face are enormously challenging and, in hospitals, departments of dentistry do not always share the profile that is enjoyed by many of the larger medical and surgical services. Successful hospital dental departments have kept up with the rapid pace of change by being innovative and focusing on their strategic fit within the organization, while meeting the needs of complex patients. There is a great deal of expertise, as well as creative thinking and leadership, thus it is imperative that we share ideas and collaborate to advance hospital dentistry across the country. Simply put, expertise without collaboration is not enough, and CAHD provides the context for that collaboration.

Previously, Canadian Hospital Dental Chiefs and General Practice Residency (GPR) Program Directors had met for the past several years to share concerns and discuss common issues. In fact, most of us initially met and worked together as part of the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada (CDAC) – mainly through accreditation site visits or committee work in support of CDAC. Over time, it became apparent that there was a need and enough momentum to create a formal association to better carry out our vision. When we met in Toronto in 2014, a founding executive was elected to explore the legal requirements and lay the groundwork for a new association. As a result, CAHD was incorporated as a non-profit organization in December 2014. At the inaugural meeting in Vancouver in May 2015,

bylaws were approved, a Board of Directors was elected, and first-year goals were established.

OD. What are those first-year goals?

A. We set three short- to medium-term goals:

1. Creation of a website — <http://www.cahd-acdh.ca>. This is our most visible outreach to the profession and the public. In addition to being our public face, the website will have a members-only section, which will be a valuable space for hospital dentists to share information and ideas. This forum for collaboration and interaction will enrich clinical practice, teaching, research, administration and dental leadership in Canadian hospitals.
2. Enhancement of the Selection Process for Hospital General Practice Residents through an electronic National Match Service. This will ensure that the highly competitive selection process for residents is transparent, ethical and fair, achieving the best possible matches for applicants to Canadian post-graduate programs. We anticipate this will be ready for the 2017-18 academic year.
3. Development of a national strategy for Antibiotic Stewardship in Dentistry. CAHD recognizes that anti-microbial resistance is a pressing international public-health problem associated with increased morbidity, mortality and health-care costs, and that some of the increase in resistance is directly attributed to the indiscriminate or poor use of antibiotics. Our research shows that dentists currently prescribe approximately 10 percent of all antibiotics dispensed to patients in Canada. We are working with our medical colleagues to advance understanding by dental professionals and the public of this looming crisis and to develop guidance for dentists in their prescribing practices. We are also building partnerships with national health organizations to advance this agenda across health professions and to the public.


OD. Who can join CAHD?

A. Membership is open to all Canadian dentists, dental students and residents. More about membership and application forms can be found on our website <http://www.cahd-acdh.ca>.

OD. When is your next meeting and who can attend?

A. Our next meeting will be held in Halifax on May 13, 2016, and is open to all CAHD members. The theme for the scientific session of our Annual General Meeting is the development and utilization of databases and registries for quality of care, research and administrative requirements. Hospital dentistry must become more data-driven to understand and improve outcomes, to meet the needs of our complex patients, to approach provincial governments and hospital leadership for adequate funding, and to improve access to care for some of Canada's most vulnerable populations. We are hoping to add resident abstracts to this meeting and continue to develop a strong scientific program for future meetings.

OD. How does the CAHD enrich the landscape of organized dentistry?

A. There are many dental organizations in Canada that have an interest in and do important work to support hospital dentistry, and whose members work in hospitals. These include the Canadian Dental Association through its Committee on Clinical and Scientific Affairs, the ODA's Hospital Services Committee and similar committees in other provinces, as well as provincial and national specialty groups. We anticipate building collegial relationships with these and other groups, collaborating on national issues of mutual concern and acting as a resource on hospital dental matters. 

Dr. Susan Sutherland is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Dentistry at the University of Toronto and the Dentist-in-Chief at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre in Toronto. She is the founding President of the Canadian Association of Hospital Dentists and a member of the ODA's Hospital Services Committee.