

# “It’s a Great Profession, So Make the Most of It!”

Since the first day you began your studies in dental school, you’ve probably given considerable thought to the profession of dentistry. And, with the recent economic challenges and focus on healthcare reform, you’ve likely been concerned about how this will impact you, your practice, and your future in dentistry.



Dr. Jane Puskas

Dentistry as a profession has been rather fortunate amidst all of the turmoil in healthcare. Somehow, the profession has not been attacked by healthcare reformers. We face economic challenges, as do

all businesses today, but we’ve been relatively lucky to be part of such a great profession that can be successful despite various national concerns.

Many dentists, like myself, have chosen to take an active role in organized dentistry in order to preserve this great profession. A majority of dentists choose to be involved in dental organizations and associations from the day they graduate from dental school and are proactive in the practice of dentistry.

It is important to become involved in organized dentistry for a number of reasons. The stronger organized dentistry can be, the better public image we will portray and the greater

influence we will have in the future of our great profession. Be active in the American Dental Association (ADA), state and local dental associations. Yes, it costs money to belong to these organizations, but it will be more costly if we cannot practice dentistry as we do today. If you make the investment now, it will pay off down the road.

In addition to becoming a member of ADA and your local and state dental associations, I encourage you to attend dental meetings. It is a necessary business expense to maintain your continuing education (CE), but attending meetings like the Thomas P. Hinman Dental Meeting also offers so much more. Dental meetings can give you the tools you need to be successful in this profession, including:

- **The Latest Advancements.** Dental meetings bring together the very latest technologies, practices and products in the industry. Where else can you learn about all of these advancements in one place? You can gain knowledge in hands-on workshops and lectures given by the world’s leading authorities, as well as see them demonstrated by the industry’s foremost experts in an exhibit hall environment. As the profession of dentistry advances, it will be important for you to stay on the leading edge to not only sharpen your skills, but provide your patients the best possible care.

- **Business-Building Tools.** Dental meetings don’t just focus on clinical topics in their course offerings. They also offer courses and educational tracks that are geared for the business of dentistry. Building a successful practice is no easy task, regardless of whether you are just starting out or you’ve been in practice for a number of years. Most dental meetings will offer courses on everything from human resource management and marketing your services to office makeovers and financial management.
- **One-Stop Shopping.** Dental meeting exhibit halls can be somewhat overwhelming, but also very valuable. Everything you need to run a practice is represented in an exhibit hall. And, you can touch and feel equipment and products before you buy them. By checking out these items at a meeting, you save valuable time during your office hours. In addition, many exhibiting companies offer show specials where it can be more financially advantageous to make the purchase at the meeting itself.
- **Networking Opportunities.** The largest dental meetings in the country attract more than 20,000 professionals to their meetings and they provide

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numerous opportunities for networking. Attend the various events and do your homework prior to attending to determine who you'd like to meet at the meeting. This is a chance to speak with respected authorities in your areas of interest or simply meet with your fellow alumni during the meeting. There will be many opportunities to talk with colleagues and learn from one another.

- **Social Events.** Most dental meetings host receptions for the various dental school alumni in their regions. They also provide attendees with various social events designed to bring together friends and colleagues. The food and beverages are often free and it's a chance to have some fun, network with others who share common interests and enjoy your time away from the office. If you are married, there also are social events designed for spouses that allow them to have fun as well while you are taking courses or visiting the exhibit hall.

Meetings like the Hinman offer a

*Did you know that Dr. Thomas P. Hinman purchased x-ray technology in 1898 (only three years after it was discovered) and was among the first dentists in the nation to incorporate radiography into his practice? He demonstrated it to others at dental meetings and brought experts to the early Hinman meetings to lecture in the discipline of radiography.*

great value to attendees. Across a few days and at minimal cost, you can fulfill your continuing education requirements, shop and purchase needed products and equipment in the exhibit hall, and reconnect with colleagues and friends at various events and receptions. While there are online CE opportunities and small seminar courses available to you, they don't deliver the value for the dollar that a dental meeting provides. Nor do they give you the caliber of expertise that only a meeting that's been doing this for over a century can give.

It's not too early to start attending either. Dental meetings have special programs, events and incentives for dental students. They may have special courses geared just for students or provide free attendance to a variety of courses appropriate for the dental student. In addition, some meetings, like

Hinman, provide an orientation luncheon for students designed to familiarize them with the CE process, courses, the exhibit hall, the convention facilities and networking/social events.

By becoming more involved, you will enjoy the practice of dentistry even more. After every meeting you attend, you will return to your office with more knowledge and more enthusiasm

for the profession than you can imagine. Check out the various dental meetings and make arrangements to attend. You won't regret it.

Dental school is a challenging, but exciting time in your life. And, it's just the beginning of what will be a gratifying and accomplished career. Remember how fortunate we are to be dentists ■

*Dr. Jane Puskas is a practicing dentist in Atlanta and a long-time member of the Hinman Dental Society, currently serving as Secretary. She also is a member of the ADA, Georgia Dental Association, International College of Dentists, American College of Dentists and Pierre Fauchard Academy. Dr. Puskas is a graduate of the Harvard University School of Dental Medicine.*