

Oral Health Leader Recognized For Pain Control Contribution



I asked Margaret J. Fehrenbach, RDH, MS, a recognized public health advocate, to talk about her contribution to national oral health. She has just been announced as the recipient of the American Dental Hygienists' Association A. C. Fones award for 2013. Dr. Alfred Civillon Fones himself has been Recognized as the founder of dental hygiene.

Margaret Fehrenbach In Her Teaching Role

Ms. Fehrenbach shared with me this memorable essay she wrote:

Recently I received an email from a dental hygienist who had trouble in her private practice administering local anesthesia with a certain injection; it was that pesky inferior alveolar nerve block. She had participated in one of my local anesthesia seminars at least ten years ago but she had lost her "mojo" since she had taken a break from private practice to raise her children. As I wrote her back, letting her know that I recently had contributed to a textbook on the subject, I realized how much I had grown and also given back to the dental hygiene profession in the area of local anesthesia. My contribution was not just to the new textbook I know now but also to our profession overall.

For almost twenty years, I have written and presented seminars on the subject, but with this contribution I was now in the arena of clinical practice on even a larger national scale and ongoing basis. My thoughts that have accumulated over the years were now going to be shared and then committed to memory by dental hygiene students and clinicians that I would never meet or interact with even on a webinar. The responsibility was enormous. Was I ready for this?

The answer was yes! The clinical information streamed out of me and I found myself thinking each time: How can I make the dental hygienist the best they can be at providing pain and hemostatic control for their patients during nonsurgical periodontal therapy. We fought hard and long for this expanded duty and some states are still waiting for "change" to occur!

I guess some may think it is odd that I was not the main editor on the textbook, but that seemed to free me to concentrate on the clinical ramifications that present themselves with this somewhat difficult task we have added to our professional duties. I knew the fear and anxiety that can happen to a clinician as they proceed due to all those seminars and I also knew that the knowledge base can make the clinician more confident in this role from my background in head and neck anatomy.

Along the way these years, many dedicated dental hygienists helped me prepare for this contribution to our profession. There was the mentor who believed in me and set me up with my first seminars at my alma mater, where I learned what worked and what did not work. There was my fellow peers that once were participants and then taught with me, but who also taught me so much that I can now share.

There were also my editors who said told me that I was the only one that could contribute to these chapters on anatomy and technique. That confidence in my abilities helped so much as I agonized over each little step in the process. I thank them all as well my profession that has accepted my knowledge base in this important area for our patients.

Congratulations to Ms. Fehrenbach! Your pioneering work about pain control education is appreciated by all of us. It is a memorable contribution to the oral health of the nation.

And congratulations to all the dental hygienists in the world! Our smiles depend on you!

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