

# Focus On Oral Health



A newsletter for North Dakota's oral health community

Spring 2013

## Dental Workforce Surveys completed

Dental workforce surveys are mailed to North Dakota licensed dental professionals annually with the North Dakota State Board of Dental Examiners (NDSBDE) license renewal forms. Surveys for licensed dentists and dental hygienists are sent out every odd year. Dental assistant surveys are sent out every even year. Participation is voluntary and is not required for licensure.

In 2011, the survey was sent to 430 dentists; 228 dentists responded for a response rate of 53 percent. Survey analysis focused on dentists that reported to currently practice in North Dakota (212 dentists). The survey was sent to 740 dental hygienists; 492 dental hygienists responded for a response rate of 66 percent. Survey analysis focused on dental hygienists that reported to currently practice in North Dakota (376 hygienists).

In 2012, the survey was sent to 622 dental assistants; 374 dental assistants responded for a response rate of 60 percent. Survey analysis focused on dental assistants that reported to currently practice in North Dakota (315 assistants).

Results from the 2011-2012 dental workforce surveys:

### Dentists

Of licensed dentists reporting to currently practice in North Dakota:

- Average age of dentists is 50 years.

- Average dental work experience is 22 years, excluding dental schooling.
- 55 percent of dentists were born in North Dakota.
- 52 percent of dentists received their dental training at the University of Minnesota.



- 93 percent routinely perform an oral cancer exam on their clients.
- 94 percent currently accept new clients.
- 52 percent actively seek new clients.
- 51 percent accept Headstart clients.
- 53 percent accept Medicaid clients.
- 23 percent accept any and all Medicaid clients that present for treatment.
- 34 percent limit the number of new Medicaid clients.
- 36 percent plan to sell their practice within the next 15 years.
- 32 percent plan to employ an associate who will purchase the practice within the next 15 years.
- 36 percent plan to retire from full-time practice within the next 15 years.

### Dental Hygienists

Of licensed dental hygienists reporting to currently practice in North Dakota:

- Average age of dental hygienists is 40 years.
- 92 percent have an Associate degree in Dental Hygiene.

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# Coalition News



## Workforce surveys completed (continued)

- 84 percent report working the right amount of hours.
- 13 percent report working fewer hours than desired.

### Dental Assistants

Of licensed dental assistants reporting to currently practice in North Dakota:

- 89 percent report working the right amount of hours.
- 7 percent report working fewer hours than desired.

## New study details the connection between cigarette tax, secondhand smoke and periodontitis

A study recently detailed in the American Journal of Public Health assessed the relation of cigarette excise tax with cigarette sales, secondhand smoke (SHS) exposure and periodontitis among U.S. lifetime nonsmokers.

The study, conducted, analyzed and reported by Anne Sanders, Ph.D., and Gary Slade, Ph.D., indicated that an increase in cigarette excise taxes may protect nonsmokers against periodontitis.

**Methods used:** Cigarette excise tax and per capita sales data from 1983 to 1998 were obtained for 50 states and the District of Columbia. Periodontal data were analyzed for 3,137 adults in 28 states from three National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey cycles (1999–2004). Measures of periodontal pocket depth and attachment level were used to classify people with moderate or severe periodontitis. Secondhand smoke exposure was classified according to gender- or race/ethnicity-specific thresholds of serum cotinine concentration.

**Results:** For each additional \$0.10 in excise tax, predicted sales of cigarettes decreased by 0.74 packs per person per month and adjusted odds of moderate or severe periodontitis decreased 22 percent. For each pack sold per person per month, adjusted odds of secondhand smoke exposure increased 28 percent and adjusted odds of periodontitis increased 15 percent. Odds of periodontitis for those exposed to SHS were elevated two-fold relative to those who were unexposed.

North Dakota Oral Health Coalition updates:

**Legislative Report** – Bills that passed include:

- SB2354 – Dental Student Loan Repayment bill which allows \$180,000 in loan repayments for dentists that will be working in public health and nonprofit clinics.

- SB2004 – Dental Student Loan Repayment bill for dentists that will be practicing in rural areas. Included in the Department of Health's budget.

- HB1454 – Seeks to create a dental therapist position. Amended to provide an interim study of the need for additional workforce.

- HB1135 – The Department of Health will oversee a contract to the Ronald McDonald Care Mobile to provide dental services to low income and underserved children.

**Ronald McDonald Care Mobile** – The Care Mobile visited 33 different sites during 2012, and provided dental services to 796 children. The Care Mobile is almost completely booked for 2013.

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## North Dakota Regional Public Health Hygienists

**Jamie Blumhagen, R.D.H.**

**Hollie Harrington, R.D.H., B.S.**

**Marlene Hulm, R.D.H.**

**Helen Kuntz, R.D.H.**

For assistance with oral health needs in your school or community, please contact the North Dakota Department of Health's Oral Health Program at 701.328.2356 or akopp@nd.gov.

# Spotlight on State Public Health Hygienists: Helen Kuntz

The North Dakota Department of Health's Oral Health Program employs four Public Health Hygienists (PHH) who provide oral health care around the state. Over the next several issues of *Focus On Oral Health*, we will introduce you to these hygienists. The PHH being featured in this issue is Helen Kuntz.

## What is your hygienist background?

I graduated from the North Dakota State College of Science Associate of Dental Hygiene program in 1990 and have been working as a hygienist now for 23 years. I am currently licensed in North Dakota and Arizona. I practiced in Arizona for 15 years both in a general dentist office that concentrated mainly on cosmetic dentistry, and also in a periodontal office. I was also a member of a charitable group, The Flying Samaritans, and would fly down to our clinic in Mexico to volunteer dental hygienist services.



## What are your PHH duties and in which area of the state do you work?

This is my second year working as a PHH, and I enjoy every minute of it. I love working with the children and look forward to seeing them. I get to go into the schools, screen the kids' teeth, place fluoride varnish treatments and sealants, and educate them about caries disease and how to prevent cavities. I travel to cities in northwest and central North Dakota.

Currently I am also employed by Custom Endodontics as a dental assistant and really enjoy their office setting. Working at this facility has made me step outside of "my box" and learn all areas of the dental office. I am also a partner in another business called The Funky Junk Depot located in my hometown of Towner. I get to use my creative side and we repurpose "junk" into usable or decorative items.

## Do you have any favorite memories from your job?

My most cherished time as a dental hygienist is being a member of The Flying Samaritans and going into another country that doesn't have the facilities and access to dental care that we do in the United States. I remember how thankful and grateful they were for the services we were able to offer them. I can still vividly recall the first time I flew into the clinic. So many people were standing in line hoping to get a chance for us to see them that day.

## What are you passionate about?

My biggest message is to children – to try to convey to them not to start using tobacco products and educate them not only on the oral ramifications, but also the whole body. My greatest experience working as a PHH is when kids tell their moms and dads who I am and what I did for them.

## Parting thoughts?

As I work in private practice and see people in pain daily, it just reassures me that I get to educate kids about practicing good oral habits every day to prevent oral disease as they get older. I understand that they may not love brushing and flossing now, but I always remind them how it will pay off in the end.

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## North Dakota Oral Health Coalition news (continued)

**Seal! ND Dental Sealant Program** – During fall 2012, the NDDoH Public Health Hygienists (PHH) screened approximately 1,900 children and applied nearly 4,100 dental sealants on their premolars and molars. In spring 2013, the PHH screened and performed retention checks on more than 1,700 children, sealing approximately 2,100 premolars and molars (nearly 1,600 newly erupted or needing a sealant and 500 previously sealed by a PHH needing resealing).

**Missions of Mercy Project (MOMS)** – A Missions of Mercy project will be held on October 11 and 12 for children on the Standing Rock Reservation at the event center at Prairie Knights Casino. All North Dakota and some South Dakota pediatric dentists will be participating. More volunteers are needed. Please contact Ashley at 701.328.2356 or [akopp@nd.gov](mailto:akopp@nd.gov) if you are interested in helping.

The next meeting of the North Dakota Oral Health Coalition will be held in Sept. For more information, contact Ashley at 701.328.2356 or [akopp@nd.gov](mailto:akopp@nd.gov).

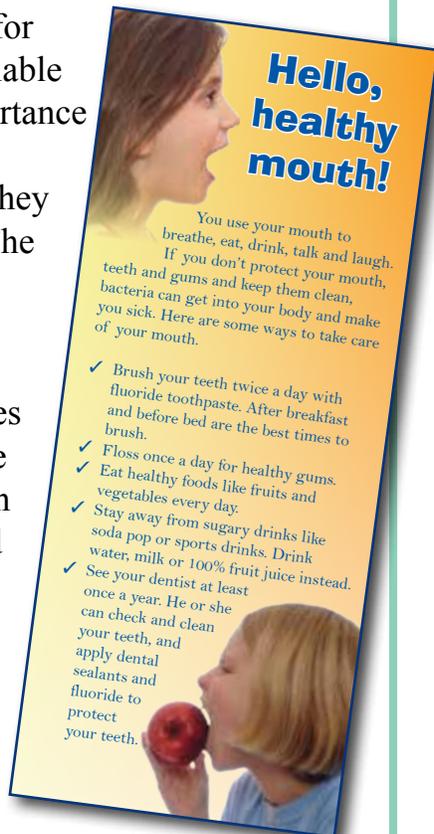
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## RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## Resources Available

A new palm card for youth is now available detailing the importance of oral health and encouraging that they not use tobacco. The palm card details how tobacco use affects oral health and possibly causes of oral cancer. The goal is for children to receive the card and share it with their parents and families. Contact [akopp@nd.gov](mailto:akopp@nd.gov) to order these cards.



The Focus On Oral Health newsletter is published three times per year by:

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