Navigating Healthcare Safely: The Role of OSAP

While much has changed in dental health care over the decades, some things have remained constant — like the Organization for Safety, Asepsis and Prevention's (OSAP's) commitment to dental infection prevention and ensuring the safety of both patients and oral health care professionals. Over the past 40 years, OSAP has effectively kept its focus on operationalizing infection control laws and guidelines, providing evidence-based education, and fostering collaboration within the oral health care community.

To delve even further into the mission and purpose of this association, we sat down with Michelle Lee, OSAP's Executive Director, to learn more about OSAP's commitment to supporting its diverse membership community, promoting education, and facilitating partnerships with key organizations to ensure the safety of every patient at every visit.

Q: What are OSAP's mission and purpose?

A: Founded in 1984, OSAP is the only dental membership association for oral health care professionals that focuses exclusively on dental infection prevention and patient and provider safety.

We support our members and the oral health care community by offering evidence-based education; maintaining an extensive collection of online resources; and collaborating with individuals, agencies, and organizations to assure the safe and infection-free delivery of oral health care to all.

Our membership community is composed of individual clinicians, group practices, educators, researchers, consultants, trainers, compliance directors, policymakers, and industry representatives who advocate for the safe and infection-free delivery of oral health care.

OSAP's vision is that every dental visit is a safe visit.

Q: Can you describe your background and role in OSAP?

A: I was hired as OSAP's Executive Director in 2018; before that, I had a 29-year career in dental and medical staffing, which included leading the Southeast's largest dental staffing firm. I also provided leadership coaching and team development training to dental practices throughout the Southeast.

As OSAP's Executive Director, my role entails leading this nonprofit membership association and representing the association at oral health care events across the country. My main focus is to ensure the board's strategic initiatives are met. Because of my dental background, I've been familiar with OSAP since the early 1990s. I very much believe in the organization's mission and vision, and I'm honored to serve as its Executive Director.

Q: How does OSAP bring value to the dental community, and what makes it successful?

A: I think this excerpt from an article that was published in 2018 on the history of OSAP explains our value and success the best:

Prior to the 1980s, Dental Healthcare Providers were routinely at increased risk of cross-infection while providing treatment for their patients. Because of repeated exposure to the microorganisms present in blood and saliva, the incidence of infectious disease was significantly higher among dental professionals than the general population during the 1970s and 1980s. Those diseases included hepatitis B, hepatitis C, tuberculosis, herpes simplex virus infections, influenza, and a variety of dermatological bacterial and mycotic diseases.¹

On June 5, 1981, the first cases of an illness subsequently defined as acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) were reported by health-care providers in California and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).² Today, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) remains one of the largest pandemics in the world. HIV is the virus that can lead to AIDS.3

In 1982, the CDC released occupational infection control (IC) guidelines for healthcare workers, including those in dentistry, that provided recommendations that the workers wear gloves, masks, and protective eyewear, and that instruments be sterilized.4

Companies from around the world entered the healthcare markets with products of varying quality. There were few regulations in place at the time to ensure product claims were substantiated.

Unfortunately, there also was a scarcity of science-based infection control education for dental clinicians.

In 1984, microbiologists at the forefront of dental infection control and several product companies met to exchange technical and practical information. As a result, they created a membership organization to focus on this important health care issue. That was the beginning of OSAP — and this year, we celebrate our 40th anniversary!

Today, the oral health care community relies on OSAP to help operationalize the guidance documents and regulations and make them easier to implement into day-to-day practices. OSAP maintains strong relationships with the CDC Division of Oral Healthcare, OSHA, the FDA, and the EPA so we can help communicate changes or alerts to the community. We work hard to be available for collaboration with all the national oral health care associations to ensure they have access to leading subject matter experts.

Our educational offerings are many. With live, in-person events; online trainings; and access to subject matter experts when there are specific questions, OSAP can help answer most any infection prevention questions that come up in the practice setting.

Q: What are some important resources, programs, and organizations that readers should know about?

A: OSAP's annual Dental Infection Prevention Boot Camp will be held Feb. 5-7, 2024, in Atlanta. This is a comprehensive, intense, foundational training that focuses on the CDC's guidelines and safety for both the dental professional and the patient. As an add-on to this event, we are offering our second-annual Antibiotic Stewardship Summit on Sunday, Feb. 4.

Our annual conference will be held at the Westin La Paloma Resort in Tucson, Ariz., May 29-June 1, 2024. In addition to throwing a great 40th anniversary party, we will also be offering educational sessions for everyone, including sessions on the latest information regarding infection prevention and patient safety.

OSAP, with the support of CareQuest Institute for Oral Health, updated its well-known educational training video, "If Saliva Were Red," this past year, and it's available to everyone at no charge. This five-minute digital video uses real dental health care personnel (DHCP) to highlight: Common dental infection control and safety flaws

- The cross-contamination DHCP would see if saliva were red
- How controlling contamination by using personal barrier protection, safe work practices, and
- effective infection control products reduce the risk of exposure Produced without a voice track, the video uses visual rather than verbal cues to stress the need for procedure-

specific dental infection control, making it a suitable training tool for classrooms and practices around the world, regardless of native language. Also included is "How to Tell the Story: A Facilitator's Guide." This guide provides facilitators, educators,

consultants, and in-practice instructors with visual cues and talking points from the video, answers to common questions, a checklist of the elements of a comprehensive dental personnel training program, and a list of

resources. We want to thank Michelle Lee, and we invite you to evaluate our wide range of products designed to protect clinicians, patients, and the practice during dental procedures. For more information, visit palmerohealth.com, call 800-344-6424 or email

Wilkins; 2010: 4.

customerservice@palmerohealth.com.

MMWR, June 7, 1991/40(22);357

- **References** Molinari, JA; Harte JA, Cottone's Practical Infection Control in Dentistry, 3rd Edition, Philadelphia, PA: Wolters Kluwer/Lippincott William &
 - Molinari, JA; Harte JA, Cottone's Practical Infection Control in Dentistry, 3rd Edition, Philadelphia, PA: Wolters Kluwer/Lippincott William & Wilkins; 2010: 8.

Healthline Media: www.healthline.com/health/hiv-aids/historyaccessed 8/24/18

Author



CPC

Michelle Lee, CPC began her tenure as Executive Director of the Organization of Safety, Asepsis, and Prevention, in 2018. She has more than 30 years of experience in the dental and healthcare industries. Her experience includes leading the Southeast's largest dental and medical staffing firm, as well as consulting with dental practices, providing leadership and team development training. Michelle is passionate about OSAP's mission to be the leading provider of infection prevention and control education, training, and credentialing that supports safe dental visits.

