

MONTEREY BAY

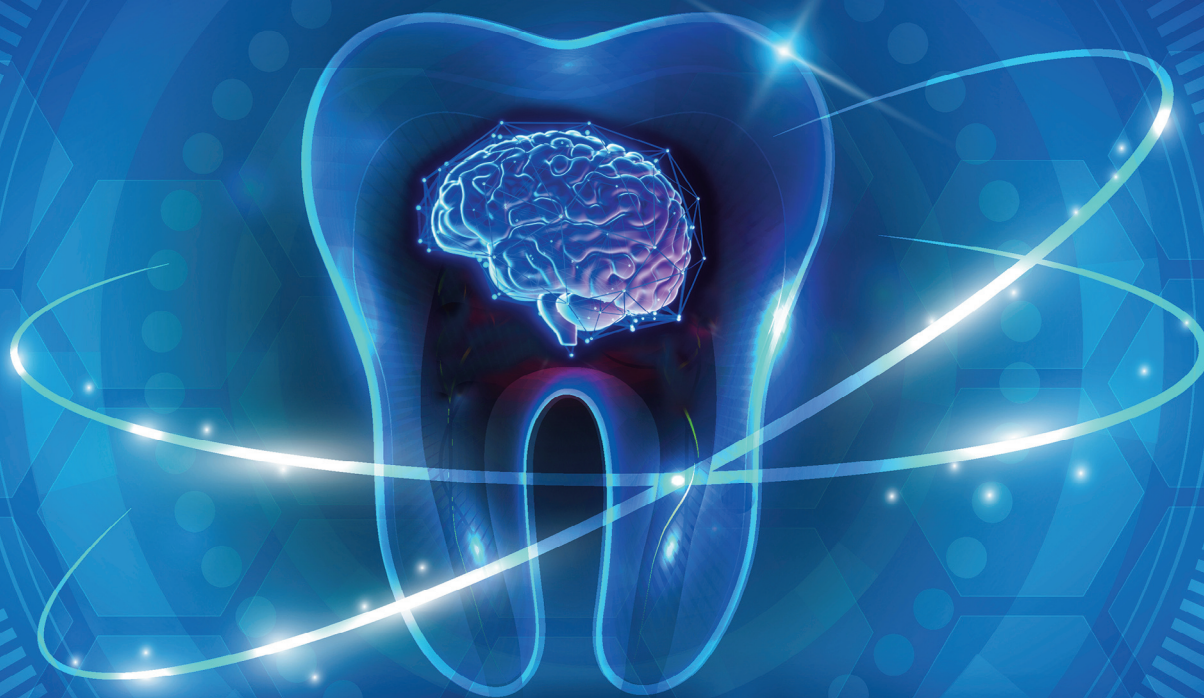
SMILELINE



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MONTEREY BAY DENTAL SOCIETY

WINTER 2026

THE DENTAL-MENTAL



C O N N E C T I O N

“ *Your mental health is everything —
prioritize it. Make the time like
your life depends on it, because
it does.* ”

— Mel Robbins

- **Mental Health within Dentistry**
- **Highlighting Provider Wellness**
- **Resources to Prevent Burnout**
- **Psychological Implications
of Oral Disease**

SmileLine

The Newsletter
of The
Monterey Bay Dental Society

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Monterey Bay Dental Society

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Editor's Column Winter 2026

Dr. Carl Sackett, DDS, Editor

Happy New Year, from the Monterey Bay Dental Society Board of Directors! We hope 2026 has started off well, in both your practices and personal life.

As we move through these first few months, it remains evident that the MBDS continues to exhibit stellar leadership and growth. Our Executive Director, George Lips, has done an amazing job at keeping the ball rolling, and keeping our members engaged and informed. George had big shoes to fill with Debi's retirement, but he has proved that he is up to the task and seems to juggle all his responsibilities with ease and poise. Thank you, George!

A new year often brings reflection, with some degree of goal setting and planning for the future. It can also bring some unexpected stress and pressure, with efforts to build and improve upon previous intentions. Dentistry has endless facets, from clinical workflow to patient relationships, staff morale, financial considerations – the list goes on. And it certainly doesn't help that many of our patients really don't want to be there: Even Vance Joy's pop culture song Riptide begins, "I was scared of dentists and the dark."

Indeed, it can be overwhelming at times, and even the most experienced provider will admit that the weight can border on suffocating, depending on the season. That being said, this issue of the SmileLine focuses on a topic that is becoming increasingly relevant, especially in our fast-paced, modern world: The Dental / Mental Connection.

Healthcare in general can be a demanding profession, and it has the potential to take its toll on our mind, body and soul. As much as we want to convince ourselves that we can handle it all, we will inevitably encounter days where it seems like Murphy's Law is firing on all pistons. And let's not forget that, in terms of the restorations themselves, the difference between success and failure is a mere .5mm – No pressure! It's no coincidence that more CEs are highlighting Provider Burnout, and organized dentistry has moved the issue as a top priority.



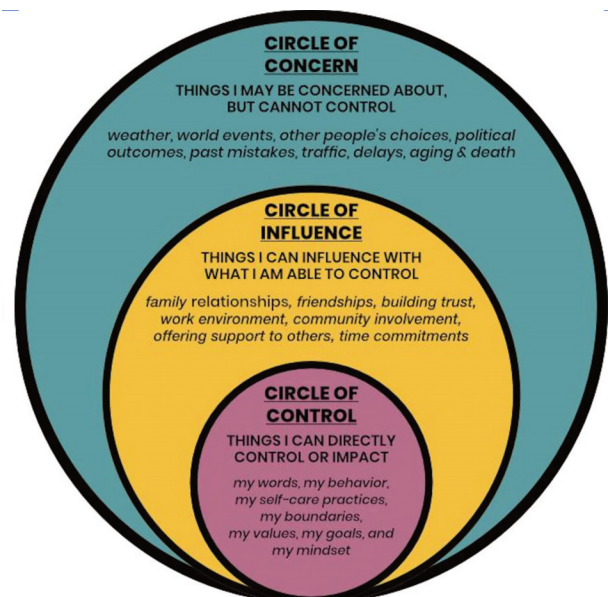
Time spent in nature with our loved ones is a surefire recipe for positive Mental Health.

One of our own member dentists, Dr. Sumeet Singh, has penned a poignant article for us, giving guidance on how to find balance amongst our personal and professional responsibilities. If you follow him, Dr. Singh also encourages his social media platform with uplifting messages and posts.

The MBDS has been fortunate to feature Dr. Joshua Austin as a CE Speaker for our

membership. Based out of Texas, he was willing to share a vulnerable and authentic story of his own struggles with mental health. His genuine perspective, and openness to shine a light on this sensitive issue is most appreciated. Dr. Austin gives us hope and reassurance that we are all in this together and can feel comfortable broaching these difficult topics.

As for myself, having practiced for over two decades now, I think I can offer some words of wisdom, to those who would oblige me. Firstly, investing in a Circle of Control diagram can be a helpful reminder of what aspects of our lives we can ultimately direct and dictate, and those we cannot (Post it on your fridge, or desk).



continued next page

I've also been trying to incorporate Monotasking recently, rather than multi-tasking. While addressing many problems at once can seem efficient, one may find that separating into smaller, more digestible assignments can be less stressful.

We dentists can all-too-easily spread ourselves thin and then find ourselves burning the candle at both ends. Remember: If you say "yes" to something, you are giving a "no" to something else (the vice versa is also true).

Finally, psychiatrist Phil Stutz authored a book entitled, "The Tools," to help us live life in forward motion (featured in Jonah Hill's documentary, "Stutz").

Of course, we could not address the Dental / Mental connection without also discussing the mental health ramifications of poor oral health. This is yet another topic that is garnering more attention. We all know that periodontal and dental

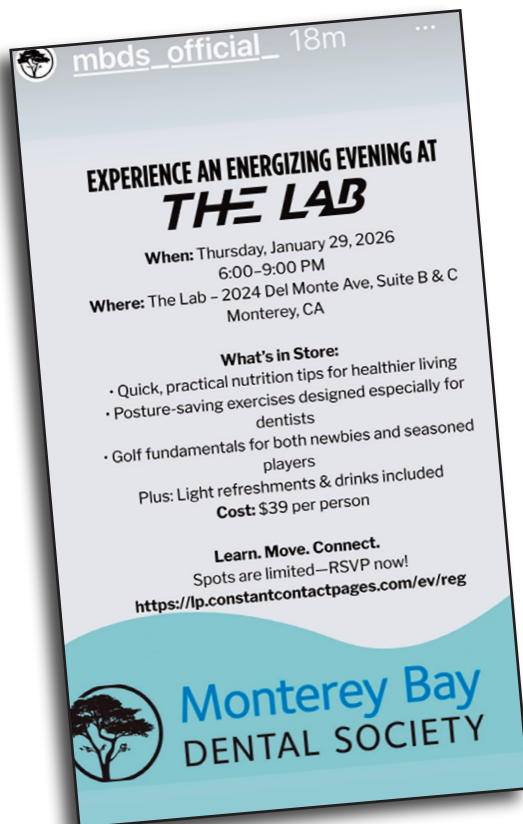
disease can have systemic and cardiovascular complications. Studies are showing, however, that perhaps these conditions can lead to disorders of anxiety, depression, and even dementia. Dental professionals also have a unique opportunity to check in on their patient's own mental health and can potentially impact their lives in this other venue.

The MBDS wishes you all health, happiness, success and prosperity in this upcoming year. Take care of yourself, take care of one another, and we'll see you at the next meeting.

Warm regards,



Charles ("Carl") Sackett, DDS
MBDS SmileLine Editor



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latest information

about our local

Monterey Bay Dental Society!

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Incoming President's Letter Winter 2026

Dr. Matthew Ronconi, DDS
President

Dear Members of the
Monterey Bay Dental Society,

It is truly one of my greatest honors to serve a second term as your President.

As I considered taking on this role again, I asked myself: Why should I serve another term? The answer is simple—I love my job. I love being an orthodontist, and I am passionate about the work we do together. There is nothing else I would rather be doing, and I suspect that many of you feel the same way.

We have all hit the jackpot by being able to pursue our profession in this beautiful area we call home. It is essential that we protect this privilege and safeguard the integrity of our profession.

If we remain passive in organized dentistry, decisions will be made for us, and we cannot allow that to happen. I am committed to serving a second term because I believe in the power of organized dentistry, and I am convinced that we are all better off when we work together.



Dentistry can often feel isolating, and it is all too easy to neglect our mental health amidst the demands of caring for our patients and managing our practices. I am particularly excited about the theme for SmileLine, which emphasizes the importance of prioritizing our well-being. My main goal this year is to bring us together through events that nurture our spirits and foster a sense of community.

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to each of you for entrusting me with the honor of serving as your president for 2026. I promise to work tirelessly to make this year the best one yet.

Thank you for your support and dedication to our profession.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Ronconi". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Matthew Ronconi
President, Monterey Bay Dental Society

“*It's up to you today to start making healthy choices. Not choices that are just healthy for your body, but healthy for your mind.*”

— Steve Maraboli



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Upcoming 2026 Continuing Education Schedule



Monterey Bay
DENTAL SOCIETY

Events in 2026

Friday, January 23, 2026

Periodontal Disease in the Modern Era: Diagnosis & Treatment for Lasting Success

Julia Shearer Smith, Hygiene Mastery



At the Monterey Bay Dental Society
4 C.E. Units (Core)
9:00 – 1:00 p.m.
\$109 General Admission

Hosted by Monterey Bay Dental Society

Wednesday, January 28, 2026

Sexual Harassment Prevention Training

Michael Rossiter, Attorney/Partner - *Scott & Whitehead Expense*



Live webinar
4-6 p.m.
\$25 Employees: 4-5 p.m.
2 C.E. Units (Core)
\$49 Employers / Managers 4-6 p.m.

Hosted by Harbor Dental Society

Thursday, January 29, 2026

Join Us for an Evening at the Lab!



MBDS Social Event
5:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Light Refreshments
and Drinks
\$39 per person

Hosted by Monterey Bay Dental Society

Tuesday, February 3, 2026

Responsibilities & Requirements for Prescribing Controlled Substances

Casey Grover, MD, and Reb Close, MD



Live webinar
2 C.E. Units (Core)*
6–8 p.m.
\$49 MBDS members and staff
\$79 Non-members

**IMPORTANT: This course satisfies the 2 C.E. unit requirement (for dentists) made effective by the Dental Board of California for license renewal effective January 1, 2023.*

Hosted by Harbor Dental Society

Thursday, February 5, 2026

Diode Laser Technology and all its applications

Darrel Chun, DDS



Seascape Golf Club, Aptos, CA
2 C.E. Units (Core)
6–9 p.m.

Early-Bird through Oct 19, 2025

\$19 MBDS members; \$39 Non-members

After October 20, 2025

\$39 MBDS members; \$69 Non-members

Hosted by Monterey Bay Dental Society

Wednesday, February 25, 2026

California Law Update & Cyber Security Best Practices

Michael Rossiter, Attorney/Partner - *Scott & Whitehead Expense*



Live webinar
2 C.E. Units (Core)
6–8 p.m.
\$49 MBDS members and staff
\$79 Non-members

Hosted by Harbor Dental Society

Friday, February 27, 2026

A Guide to Oral Cancer and Providing Oral Care to Patients Undergoing Cancer Treatment

Mark Mintline, DDS



At the Monterey Bay Dental Society
4 C.E. Units (Core)
9:00 – 1:00 p.m.
\$149 MBDS Members
\$169 Non-Members

Hosted by Monterey Bay Dental Society

Friday, March 06, 2026

How to Save Thousands on Your Next Lease Renewal

Aaron Gelmon, Acuity Negotiations



Live Webinar
No C.E.
6:00 – 7:00 p.m.
Free

Upcoming 2026 Continuing Education Schedule (Continued)

Friday, March 13, 2026

BLS/CPR Certification

Tammy Brockett



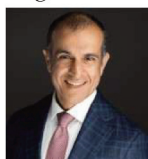
At the Monterey Bay Dental Society
4 C.E. Units
9:00-1:00 p.m.
\$85

Hosted by Monterey Bay Dental Society

Thursday, March 18, 2026

The AI Impact: How Artificial Intelligence is Changing Dentistry

Parag R. Kachalia, DDS



Live webinar
1.5 C.E. Units (Core)
6-7:30 p.m.
Complementary to MBDS Members

Hosted by Harbor Dental Society

Tuesday, March 31, 2026

OSHA and Infection Control

Nancy Dewhirst, RDH, BS



Live webinar
3 C.E. Units (Core)
6-9:15 p.m.
\$79 MBDS members
\$99 Non-members

Hosted by Harbor Dental Society

Thursday, April 2, 2026

California Dental Practice Act & Ethics Training

Nancy Dewhirst, RDH, BS



Live webinar
2 C.E. Units (Core)
6-8:15 p.m.
\$49 MBDS members and staff
\$79 Non-members

Hosted by Harbor Dental Society

Thursday, April 9, 2026

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP DINNER

Practice Transitions: Buying, Selling, and Planning Ahead—Even If You're Not Ready Yet

Cincy Hartwell, Premier Dental Consulting



The Bayview Grill, Bayonet Blackhorse, Seaside
2 C.E. Units (Core)
6-9:00 p.m.
MBDS members complimentary
\$69 Guests
\$99 Non-MBDS members

Hosted by Monterey Bay Dental Society

Thursday, April 16, 2026

The Power of AI is at our Fingertips: Introduction to Digital Dentistry

Jinny Bender, DDS



Live webinar
1.5 C.E. Units (Core)
6-7:30 p.m.
Complementary to MBDS Members

Hosted by Harbor Dental Society

Thursday, May 21, 2026

Bites, Beverages & Banter

Social Event



Pop-up Event – Salinas (TBD)
5:30 - 7:30 p.m.
Free to Members

Wednesday, June 10, 2025

Implementing a Workplace Violence Prevention Plan for the Dental Practice and Best Practices

Michael Rossiter, Attorney/Partner - *Scott & Whitehead Expense*



Live webinar
2 C.E. Units (Core)
6-8 p.m.
\$49 MBDS members and staff
\$79 Non-members

Hosted by Harbor Dental Society

Friday, June 19, 2026

Anterior Composite Restorations that Can Elevate Your Practice

Troy Schmedding, DDS



At the Monterey Bay Dental Society
8 C.E. Units (Core)
9:00 - 1:00 p.m.
\$285 MBDS Members
\$135 Staff
\$315 Non-Members

Hosted by Monterey Bay Dental Society

Friday, August 14, 2026

Periodontal Disease in the Modern Era: Diagnosis & Treatment for Lasting Success

Julia Dent, Hygiene Mastery



At the Monterey Bay Dental Society
4 C.E. Units (Core)
9:00 - 1:00 p.m.
\$109 General Admission

Hosted by Monterey Bay Dental Society

Upcoming 2026 Continuing Education Schedule (Continued)

Friday, August 21, and Saturday, August 22, 2026
Bay Area Dental Expo; [Visit their website](#)
 Santa Clara Conference Center



Tuesday, September 1, 2026
Responsibilities & Requirements for Prescribing Controlled Substances

Casey Grover, MD, and Reb Close, MD



Live webinar

2 C.E. Units

(Core)* 6–8 p.m.

\$49 MBDS members and staff

\$79 Non-members

**IMPORTANT: This course satisfies the 2 C.E. unit requirement (for dentists) made effective by the Dental Board of California for license renewal effective January 1, 2023.*

Hosted by Harbor Dental Society

Thursday, September 10, 2026
Exploring AI for Dental Hygienists

Bridget Reilly, RDH



Live webinar

1.5 C.E. Units (Core)

6–7:30 p.m.

Complementary to MBDS Members

Hosted by Harbor Dental Society

Thursday, October 1, 2026
Navigating Insurance with AI

Sana Changezi, DDS



Live webinar

1.5 C.E. Units (Core)

6–7:30 p.m.

Complementary to MBDS Members

Hosted by Harbor Dental Society

Friday, October 9, 2026
BLS/CPR Certification

Tammy Brockett



At the Monterey Bay Dental Society

4 C.E. Units

9:00–1:00 p.m.

\$85

Hosted by Monterey Bay Dental Society

Tuesday, November 3, 2026
OSHA and Infection Control

Nancy Dewhirst, RDH, BS



Live webinar

3 C.E. Units (Core)

6–9:15 p.m.

\$79 MBDS members

\$99 Non-members

Hosted by Harbor Dental Society

Thursday, Nov 5, 2026
California Dental Practice Act & Ethics Training

Nancy Dewhirst, RDH, BS



Live webinar

2 C.E. Units (Core)

6–8:15 p.m.

\$49 CDA members and staff

\$79 Non-members

Hosted by Harbor Dental Society

Visit mbdsdentist.com to register



Welcome To Our New Members for 2026

Last Name	First Name	Join Type	Degree Title	GradYear
Amanova	Aigerim	New Join	DDS	1/1/2025
Bhaskar	Brian	New Join	DDS	1/1/2019
Haddad	Perla	New Join	DDS	1/1/2025
Hong	Rachel	New Join	DDS	1/1/2022
Iyengar	Neal	New Join	DDS	1/1/2025
Johnson	Aprile	New Join	DMD	1/1/2025
Klinefelter	Jamie	New Join	DMD	1/1/2024
Leeds	Danny	New Join	DDS	1/1/1996
Martinez	Adilene	New Join	DMD	1/1/2025
Nagamine	Sarah	New Join	DDS	1/1/2025
Nguyen	Thuy Tien	New Join	DDS	1/1/2024
Tancioco	Ramon	New Join	DMD	1/1/2018
Tobin	Sophie	New Join	DDS	1/1/2025

We encourage old members to reach out and welcome our new members if they have not done so already. We are excited and happy to have them join us! For information about contacting our new members visit the member only section of the website for the full member directory that includes addresses and phone numbers.

Welcome to our Incoming 2026 MBDS Board of Directors

President	Matthew Ronconi, DDS
President-elect	Steven Ross, DDS
Vice-President	Joshua Sanchez, DDS
Secretary	Matthew Wetzel, DDS
Treasurer	Richard Kent, DDS
CDA BCR Chairman	Devin Bernhardt, DDS
Immediate Past President	Christopher Mule, DDS
County Directors	Ryan Lehr, DDS (Monterey County), Emma Bhaskar, DDS (Monterey County), Anne Simonsen, DDS (Monterey County) Touraj (TJ) Khalizadeh, DMD (Santa Cruz County) Diana Boado, DDS (San Benito County)
Publications	Carl Sackett, DDS
Legislative Chair	Daniel Pierre, DDS & Nannette Benedict, DDS
Dental Health Committee	Lloyd Nattkemper, DDS
Community & Public Relations	Rania Melhem, DDS
Ethics Committee	David Shin, DDS
New Dentist Committee	Touraj (TJ) Khalizadeh, DMD
Members Committee	Joshua Sanchez, DDS (Vice President)
Continuing Education Committee	Steven Ross, DDS

Our Outgoing 2025 MBDS Board of Directors

President	Christopher Mule, DDS
President-elect	Matthew Ronconi, DDS
Vice-President	Steven Ross, DDS
Secretary	Matthew Wetzel, DDS
Treasurer	Richard Kent, DDS
CDA BCR Chairman	Devin Bernhardt, DDS
Immediate Past President	Sarah Frahm, DDS
County Directors	Adriana Lalinde, DDS (Monterey County), Matthew Ronconi, DDS (Monterey County), Touraj (TJ) Khalizadeh, DMD, MD (Santa Cruz County) Joshua Sanchez, DDS (Santa Cruz County) TBD (San Benito County)
Publications	Carl Sackett, DDS
Legislative Chair	Daniel Pierre, DDS & Nannette Benedict, DDS
Dental Health Committee	Lloyd Nattkemper, DDS
Community & Public Relations	Open seat
Ethics Committee	David Shin, DDS
New Dentist Committee	Garrett Criswell, DDS
Membership Committee	Steven Ross, DDS
Continuing Education Committee	Matthew Ronconi, DDS

The 2025 House of Delegates



The California Dental Association (CDA) House of Delegates met on November 21st and 22nd in Sacramento for its 56th Annual Session to conduct association business, hear updates on key initiatives, and take action on resolutions impacting the profession.

Leadership & Elections

- Dr. Robert Hanlon was elected CDA President for 2026.
- Dr. Joan Otomo-Corgel was elected Secretary (2026).
- Dr. Scott Kim was elected Treasurer (2026–2027).
- Dr. Ariane Terlet was elected ADA Thirteenth District Trustee following a contested election.

Future of Dentistry & Insurance Reform

Members received updates on CDA's Future of Dentistry initiative, including the formation of a new workgroup chaired by Dr. Natasha Lee. CDA leadership also shared progress on dental insurance reform, with a focus on transparency, advocacy, and addressing dental plan challenges.

Key Resolutions Adopted

- Merger of San Mateo County Dental Society and Mid-Peninsula Dental Society (effective upon legal completion).
- Cleanup amendments to CDA Bylaws and General Operating Principles.
- Insurance Benefits Portal Requirements, urging improved accuracy and transparency in benefit estimates.

- Online Review Platforms Reform, encouraging CDA to seek federal legislation allowing dentists to publicly respond to patient reviews to clarify misinformation.
- Honorary Membership granted to Cathy Levering.
- Increased funding for membership recruitment and engagement, raising the CDA/TDIC Membership Development Grant to \$120,000 annually.

Resolutions Defeated or Referred

- Proposals related to CDA governance restructuring, leadership dues requirements, and board chair restructuring were defeated.
- Measures addressing children with Type 1 diabetes as an oral health at-risk population and transparency in dental management arrangements were referred to appropriate CDA entities for further study.

Recognition & Awards

- Dr. Kelsey Sloane – Webb Family Grant Recipient
- Dr. Mark Mintline – Dr. Arthur A. Dugoni Faculty Award
- Dr. Edgardo de la Vega – Humanitarian Award

Our Monterey Bay Dental Society was represented by Drs. Devin Bernhardt, Steven Ross, Matthew Ronconi, and Christopher Mule. Our executive director, George Lips, helped to coordinate travel and lodging arrangements and kept our representatives focused throughout the two days. Our dental society is also

The 2025 House of Delegates (Continued)

represented at the state level by Dr. Lindley Zerbe, who is currently the Chair of the Board Component Representatives.

Our occupation is in a strong position both at the State and Federal levels through the support of both CDA and the ADA. It is so important to support organized dentistry for their efforts regarding advocacy, continuing education, and practice support amongst many other reasons. Please help to promote the good we do through your membership renewals!

If you know of any colleagues interested in joining, please refer them to our dental society office, or to any of our board members. We look to support our existing members and welcome new members as well. Please reach out if there is any way we can help improve your experience as a member of the tripartite.

Sincerely,
Dr. Christopher Mulé
2025 President

Bites, Beverages & Banter



Always looking for an excuse to get together, the camaraderie within the MBDS is one of our biggest strengths. Enjoying each other's company outside of the office is a virtue we can all benefit from, and connecting without the distraction of our patient schedules is welcomed by all.

Alejandro's in Monterey was the surprise locale for one of our 2025 B, B & B Events, and we look forward to hosting even more.



Keep your eyes peeled on your Inbox for the next Invitation coming your way!

Installation of Officers Meeting For 2026

On Friday, October 10th, the MBDS hosted its annual Installation of Officers Meeting, and we were once again able to return to the beautiful **Monterey Bay Aquarium**. Seated in front of the *Million Gallon Tank*, our guests were able to enjoy their Buffet Dinner while being hypnotized by the variety of swimming sea life.

As always, the evening featured recognition of the Outgoing Board of Directors, and an introduction of the 2026 BOD. Our Incoming President, **Dr. Matthew Ronconi**, was our host for the evening, and our component owes him a debt of gratitude for stepping into this role once again.

The MBDS is also incredibly fortunate to have **Dr. Joshua Sanchez** as a member. Dr. Sanchez is owner of *Seal Rock Dental Care*, in Soquel – a practice which he has put his heart and soul into building and creating. He tells us BOD colleagues that, in the early days of opening, he even needed to sleep there some nights, to truly dedicate the time needed for final touches!

Outside of his busy practice, Dr. Sanchez is also heavily involved in **Dentistry4Vets**, and oversees countless patient cases at the local organization. The community has greatly benefitted from his leadership, and his passion for helping our Vets is inspiring to say the least.



On a personal level, Josh is a true joy to be around. He is always smiling, incorporating humor, and brightening each room he enters. He is a good friend, a dedicated husband, and a proud father as well. He's also a Fantasy Football fanatic, and loves a good troll or taunt now and again.

It is no surprise that the Monterey Bay Dental Society has awarded Dr. Sanchez as our **2025 MBDS Dentist of the Year**.



We are all super excited to see the many ways in which Dr. Sanchez will help our Component to flourish and grow. Thank you for all you do, Josh! If you are at one of our General Membership Meetings, and see him around, please give him a well-earned Congratulations...

Next Installation Dinner in the Fall, folks! Be there, or be square.

DENTIST OF THE YEAR — Dr. Johua Sanchez

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The Heart of the Dental–Mental Connection

By Dr. Sumeet Singh, DDS

As dentists, we spend our days helping patients feel confident in their smiles. But behind every clinical success lies a deeper truth: our mental and emotional well-being is essential to the care we provide.

This is the foundation of the **Dental–Mental Connection**.

The profession demands excellence, empathy, and composure. Yet, to show up as our best selves, we must cultivate balance, prioritize joy, and invest in personal fulfillment. A thriving dental career is not built only on technical skill—it is strengthened by a healthy mindset, strong relationships, and a life filled with purpose.

When we tend to our inner world, we elevate our outer impact.

Balancing Life: A Healthy Dentist Is a Better Dentist

Life balance is not something that happens by accident. It is created through thoughtful decisions and intentional habits. Dentistry can be high-pressure, emotionally intense, and physically demanding—but balance is what keeps us grounded and energized.

Protect Your Time and Energy

Set boundaries that honor your well-being. This may mean protecting your lunch hour, sticking to designated work hours, or allowing yourself the freedom to say no when needed. Boundaries help ensure that you don't pour from an empty cup.

Be Fully Present in Each Space

When you're with patients, give them your best attention. When you're with family or enjoying personal time, allow yourself to disconnect from work. Presence allows you to enjoy your life more deeply and reduces mental overload.

Let Balance Shift Naturally

Some days require more from you professionally, and some days call for rest, connection, or self-care. Balance is flexible. What matters is adjusting with intention rather than judgment.

Rest Is a Professional Responsibility

Fatigue affects clinical quality, emotional stability, and personal happiness. Building rest into your schedule—whether



Dr. Sumeet Singh

Dr. Sumeet Singh earned his DDS degree from New York University and has been passionately practicing dentistry since 2009. With practices across Monterey County and beyond, he is fulfilling his vision of providing trusted, comfortable and affordable dental care in a family-oriented environment.

Dr. Singh is an active speaker and was even featured on the *"The Remarkable Dentist"* Podcast.

Outside of the office, Dr. Singh loves to play golf, and enjoys spending time with his wife, Dr. Harleen, and their son, Gurshan.

through better sleep, weekend downtime, or quiet morning routines—strengthens your resilience and supports long-term joy in dentistry. **A balanced dentist is more patient, more focused, and more fulfilled.**

Cultivating a Positive Attitude

A positive attitude in dentistry is more than a nicety—it is a transformational force. We set the emotional tone for our practices. Our mindset influences our team, our patients, and our entire environment.

Positivity Builds Patient Confidence

Many people fear the dental chair. A warm, encouraging, and optimistic attitude can immediately ease tension. Your presence can turn a stressful moment into a reassuring one.

Positivity Strengthens Team Culture

Teams look to us for leadership. A positive leader encourages collaboration, reduces conflict, and creates a culture where people feel

The Heart of the Dental–Mental Connection (Continued)

appreciated. This environment not only improves performance but also makes coming to work enjoyable for everyone.

Positivity Enhances Your Resilience

Choosing gratitude and perspective—even during challenging cases or difficult days—helps you maintain emotional strength. A positive mindset doesn't deny stress; it empowers you to move through it with grace.

Positivity is a skill that grows stronger the more intentionally we practice it.

Joy: The Emotional Fuel That Keeps Us Inspired

Joy is not a small detail—it's the heart of a fulfilling life and career.

Joy Reminds Us Why We Chose Dentistry

Moments of joy reconnect us with our passion for helping others. A grateful patient, a successful outcome, or a humorous moment with your team can reignite your sense of purpose.

Joy Protects Mental Health

Joy counters stress and reduces emotional fatigue. Seeking joy regularly—through small daily pleasures or big life experiences—keeps you grounded and emotionally balanced.

Joy Makes Us More Compassionate Clinicians

When we feel joyful, we communicate better, listen more closely, and create stronger bonds with our patients. Joy enriches everything we do.

Joy isn't accidental—it grows when we prioritize experiences that uplift us.

The Value of Hobbies in a Full, Balanced Life

Hobbies allow us to explore who we are beyond the operatory. They help us recharge, express creativity, and enjoy life in meaningful ways.

Whether it's cooking, traveling, reading, fitness, gardening, music, or simply spending time in nature, hobbies add depth and fun to life.

Many dentists find peace and enjoyment in activities like golf, cycling, crafting, or photography. These hobbies provide movement, relaxation, and a healthy mental reserve.

Hobbies remind us that we are more than our profession—and that life is richest when we make space for play.

Growing Through Community, Education, and Professional Relationships

A strong Dental–Mental Connection includes continued growth. When we expand our knowledge and relationships, we gain confidence, motivation, and a deeper sense of belonging.

Build Relationships with Local Dentists

Professional camaraderie helps us share ideas, troubleshoot challenges, and feel supported. These connections can evolve into lifelong friendships and powerful collaboration.

Attend Local and National Dental Meetings

Meetings offer fresh perspectives, new techniques, and renewed inspiration. They also provide opportunities to step outside the daily routine and reconnect with the energy of the profession.

Commit to Continuing Education

CE courses sharpen skills, expand treatment options, and enrich your confidence. Lifelong learning is one of the easiest ways to remain motivated, relevant, and fulfilled in your career.

Professional growth feeds emotional wellness—and emotional wellness strengthens professional growth.

Closing Thoughts: Honor Your Dental–Mental Connection

A thriving dental career is built not only on knowledge and skill, but on mental strength, emotional fulfillment, and continual growth.

By balancing your life, nurturing a positive attitude, embracing joy, enjoying meaningful hobbies, connecting with colleagues, and investing in education, you strengthen your well-being and elevate the quality of care you provide.

A balanced dentist is a better dentist.

A joyful dentist is an inspiring dentist.

A growing dentist is a fulfilled dentist.

When you honor your **Dental–Mental Connection**, you create more than beautiful smiles—you create a beautiful, meaningful, and sustainable life.

Dr. Austin Shares His Personal Story of Dental–Mental Connection



Joshua Austin, DDS

Dr. Austin maintains a full-time restorative dentistry private practice in San Antonio, Texas. He is an editorial director and columnist for Dental Economics magazine, focusing on dental products and technology. Dr. Austin lectures around the country to study clubs and dental meetings about these topics along with online reputation management and mental health.

Dr. Austin is a graduate of the University of Texas Health Science Center Dental School and spent five years post-graduation as faculty in the Department of Restorative Dentistry.

Dr. Joshua Austin, DDS

I'm not sure why, but Monday mornings were always the darkest for me. The combination of the end of three days of not having to think about my practice and then the prospect of four straight days of stress would make Monday mornings feel like they had a pall cast over them. This particular Monday morning in early December was even darker than the others before it. I was almost in a trance as I walked outside the back door of my house and got into my car. It had been a particularly difficult time in my life. The largest rain cloud hanging over me was the loss of my best friend. Our relationship had faltered to the point of no return. In October, I had awoken to a text message from him saying "*I never want to hear from you ever again.*" That was like a dagger into my heart in the moment and continued to be so any time I thought of it. The practice was also causing some turmoil in my life during this time. A recent failure of a large cosmetic case was constantly kicking around in the back of my brain, on top of the normal day to day problems, team in fighting, financial stress and patient complaints.

In a sort of depression induced daze, I managed to get into my car and back out of my driveway. As I was driving to the office, my brain was literally swimming in dark thoughts. Without even thinking, I diverted my normal office drive and turned into a business park area between my home and office. At the end of the long side street of office buildings was a field. I had been to this field many times before. This was the field that I had decided would be the place that I took my own life.

It was a large field with tall trees lining the east side. I figured this would be the best place to finally do it. It offered several advantages over the other spots I had considered. Firstly, it was outside, so the mess from the self-inflicted 9mm gunshot wound to the head wouldn't be a big deal. Secondly, I decided to do it amongst the large trees, which would provide me some sort of camouflage from being discovered right away. I figured I could park my car in one of the busy office buildings nearby and walk over to the field. It would take a few days before anyone noticed my car just sitting there. Somehow, the idea of not being found right away offered me some kind of comfort that it would make what I was going to do easier on my family. Thirdly, the idea of being out in nature when I finally decided to pull the trigger felt

right, although in life I was never the most outdoorsy person. Our brain thinks weird thoughts when we are suffering from depression.

After parking my car, I opened my work backpack. Hidden in an inner pocket was a Ruger 9mm subcompact pistol. I know in California, the idea of carrying a handgun to the office may seem wild, but in Texas, many dentists have a concealed handgun either on their person or in their office. I walked over to the field, almost on autopilot. I negotiated my way around to the east side where the trees were. I found a tall, old oak tree with a little grass clearing under it and sat down. This was going to be it. Looking back, the thoughts swirling through my head were strange. They weren't what one might think they should be. I wasn't thinking of my wife or my family. I wasn't thinking of my mom or my dad or my siblings. I wasn't even thinking of my dogs. I was only thinking about the menial tasks I would not have to do anymore once it was over. No more answering emails. No more writing charts. No more running payroll or doing bookkeeping. That was what was on my mind as I sat in, what I thought, was going to be my last moments on earth.

I don't know how long I sat there. It's almost as if I experienced missing time. All I know is that after some moment of time passed, I was jolted out of my trance by my iPhone ringer. It was my office manager asking where I was and telling me my first patient was waiting for me. My body jumped in the way that happens when you're dozing off and feel like you're falling. I scrambled to my feet quickly and headed back to my car. My brain did not want to process what just happened and what I was about to do. That took some hours to fully parse through. It finally started to process during the afternoon. I was preparing tooth 29 for a crown. It was endodontically treated and had a large Cavit temporary filling in it from the endodontist. I remember it so vividly because this was the moment that I realized the gravity of what I almost did earlier in the day. As I prepped the tooth down, built it up and refined it, as I had done a thousand times before, I had the realization that I was brutally depressed. As I made my provisional, I decided that I needed help. I needed to talk to someone. After I cemented the provisional, I went into my private office and searched for a therapist. That day changed my life.

Judging by the statistics in dentistry, I am not alone. The CDC reports that dentists are 2.5 times more likely to die by suicide

than the general population.¹ The Journal of Deviant Behavior says that *"being a dentist increased ones risk of suicide by 564%."*² The 2021 ADA Dentist Well-Being Survey Report shows that 54% of dentists report having medium or high levels of depression. My story is not an isolated one. I personally know four dentists who have taken their own life over the past three years. Depression in dentistry is as prevalent as periodontal disease. **Why don't we talk about it more?**

Certainly, there is a stigma attached to discussing mental disease. My hope is that this will help some of you see that you are not alone. My hope is that this will help some of you see that you are not broken. We do not simply need to "grind" through our depression like we're cutting off a zirconia crown. There are treatments that work on depression. Therapy, especially EMDR (eye movement desensitization and reprocessing) has been a huge help to me. Medications like SSRI's and SNRI's are safe, predictable and readily available.

As dentists, we are by nature, fixers. We fix things. We fix decay. We fix broken teeth. We fix ugly teeth. Way too often, we think we can also fix our own brains. However, we can't use a hand piece to fix our mind. We can't cure our depression with drugs and alcohol, no matter how hard we try. We can't better our anxiety with gambling or sex. We must be comfortable enough to seek help when help is needed. Had my office manager not

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

The 988 Lifeline is an easy to remember three-digit number that anyone can call to receive support when experiencing a suicidal, mental health and/or substance use- related crisis. To reach the Lifeline, people can call or text 988 or chat at Lifeline (988lifeline.org). People who are worried about a loved one who may need crisis support may also use 988 to receive guidance and support. This number is in addition to existing national, state-wide, and local call lines for emergency and non-emergency support.

Dr. Austin Shares His Personal Story of Dental–Mental Connection (Continued)

called me that December Monday morning, I do not know if I would be alive right now to write this. There are moments of darkness, where I curse myself for not doing it. Way more often though, there are moments of love and joy where I realize how fortunate I am to be here today.

Is every day easy? No. Do I wake up with a smile on my face and a song in my heart? Never.

Despite this, I am in a better place today than I was then. Therapy is the reason for that. It has made me a better communicator.

It has helped me to process and heal. It has made me a better person. It is okay to not be okay.

We are all in this together. I am here with all of you.

Be well!

1- McIntosh WL, Spies E, Stone DM, Lokey CN, Trudeau AT, Bartholow B. Suicide Rates by Occupational Group — 17 States, 2012. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2016;65:641–645. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6525a1>.

2- Steven Stack (1996) Suicide risk among dentists: A multivariate analysis, Deviant Behavior, 17:1, 107-117, DOI: 10.1080/01639625.1996.9968016

“ Some of the most comforting words in the universe are ‘me too.’ That moment when you find out that your struggle is also someone else’s struggle, that you’re not alone, and that others have been down the same road. ”

— Anonymous

INTERESTED IN LEARNING HOW YOU CAN VOLUNTEER TO DELIVER NON-EMERGENCY DENTAL CARE TO LOW-INCOME SERVICE WORKERS?



Donate individual appointments and/or host general dental sessions in your office

Teaching Dental Education and Information Sessions



WESTERN SERVICE WORKERS ASSOCIATION (WSWA) is an all-volunteer, non-government funded independent organizing drive of the Central Coast’s lowest-paid workers: domestic workers, temporary and part-time workers, independent contractors, landscapers, security guards and others. These workers have joined together to determine collective ways to change policies that exacerbate their poverty conditions. WSWA members help fellow members through our free-of-charge 11-point benefit program, including emergency food and clothing, non-emergency dental care, preventive medical care, legal advice, job information and more. Non-emergency dental care is by far WSWA’s most requested benefit. Volunteers are urgently needed for WSWA’s non-emergency dental benefit. Call 831-429-6016 for more information.

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Talkspace Go **ADA.org/TalkspaceGo**

Your well-being, your way. Talkspace Go, a self-directed therapy app provided by Talkspace, can help you address the challenges like work stress, relationships and burnout. Get your exclusive ADA access code for complimentary access at [ADA.org/TalkspaceGo](https://ada.org/TalkspaceGo). Available for all ADA members and ASDA/ADA student members.



Pathway to Wellness (Talkspace Therapy) **ADA.org/TalkspaceTherapy**

The support you need at your fingertips, from the comfort of your own home. Pathway to Wellness (Talkspace Therapy provided by Talkspace) connects you to a therapist licensed in your state via private messaging and live video. Discounted access to Talkspace Therapy is available to all ADA and ASDA/ADA student members for a cost of approximately \$30 per month.



Well-Being Index (WBI) **ADA.org/WellBeingIndex**

Your health matters. All dentists, dental students and dental team members have free access to the Dental Well-Being Index (WBI), a validated, anonymous risk assessment tool invented and provided by the Mayo Clinic. First, set up your WBI account. Then in just one minute, you'll have access to a personalized dashboard and resources, allowing you to track your well-being over time. *Available for all dentists, dental students, and dental team members.*



State Well-Being Program Directory *(updated in 2025)* **ADA.org/WellnessDirectory**

Looking for help and guidance? Support may be closer than you think. This directory links you to local resources, state dental society contacts, ADA Wellness Ambassador and the 28 Federation of State Physician Health Programs that provide a therapeutic alternative to discipline for dentists, connecting you to assistance closer to home. *Available for all dentists, dental students, and dental team members.*



ADA Ergonomic Stretches **ADA.org/Stretch**

Better ergonomics, stretching, and exercise can help dental teams build long, healthy careers. Download the ADA Ergonomic Stretches infographic with 25 quick stretches or access the ADA Member App for more resources to keep you and your dental team healthy. The downloadable ergonomic stretches are available for all dentists, dental students, and dental team members. The ADA Member App is available to ADA Members and ASDA/ADA student members.



After a Suicide Postvention Toolkit **ADA.org/Postvention**

Developed in 2023 by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) and the ADA, the *After a Suicide Postvention Toolkit* provides guidance for those responding to a suicide death for professional dental settings. *Available for all dentists, dental students, and dental team members.*



988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

If you or someone you know is experiencing suicidal thoughts or a crisis, please text or dial 988 to be connected to the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. This service is free and confidential and is provided by a national network of more than 200 crisis centers supported by local and state sources as well as the Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). For a medical emergency dial 911.

The Mental-Dental Health Connection—Integral to Patient Care



Understanding the Mental-Dental Health Connection Said to Be Integral to Patient Care.

The impact of oral health conditions upon individuals experiencing psychiatric disorders is a key concern for both clinicians and public health professionals. A 2022 study by Tamanna Tiwari, M.P.H., and colleagues in *Frontiers in Oral Health* suggested that individuals who reported “poor mental health were more likely to be facing financial and emotional hardships and were more likely to have had COVID-19.” Poor oral health was “associated with poor mental health, age, socioeconomic status, and not visiting the dentist at regular intervals.” Tiwari and colleagues also reported that “over 65% of the respondents who endorsed poor mental health reported doing nothing about their oral health symptoms.”

Aside from the COVID-19 pandemic, fear of judgment, financial factors, anxiety related to medical procedures, and poor self-concept influence decreased oral care utilization by those with mental illness. Poor oral health can result in tooth loss and compromised speech and esthetics, adversely affecting self-esteem, socialization, and occupational engagement.

Chronic oral pain is a stressor that can decrease serotonin levels, rendering the management of depression and anxiety more difficult.

The social and biological impacts of untreated oral diseases often work cyclically to worsen oral, mental, and overall health.

What can psychiatrists and public health professionals do to enhance oral health outcomes for individuals experiencing mental disorders? First, all should be aware of oral conditions commonly seen in association with these disorders. Four key conditions that are observed in patients with psychiatric disorders are tooth decay, gum diseases, dry mouth (xerostomia), and bruxism (tooth grinding.)

Tooth decay typically occurs when individuals frequently consume foods rich in fermentable carbohydrates. Frequent consumption of these carbohydrates allows them to remain in frequent contact with the teeth, where bacteria can convert them into acids that can damage the enamel and ultimately tooth dentin. Untreated, tooth decay can enter the pulp and lead to severe pain and abscesses. The latter can spread to the brain or chest cavity, resulting in the need for urgent medical interventions.

Gum diseases occur on a spectrum that ranges from gingivitis to periodontitis. The latter is of concern because it leads to the loss of supporting bone and soft tissue attachments around the teeth. Ultimately, teeth may be lost and require replacement. Worsening of periodontitis is associated with several conditions observed in psychiatric populations, including tobacco and cannabis use,

The Mental-Dental Health Connection—Integral to Patient Care (Continued)

diabetes, and poor nutrition. Studies have demonstrated a bilateral relationship between diabetes and periodontitis in that treatment of periodontitis can preserve the teeth and enhance glycemic control.

A key factor that often drives tooth decay and gum disease is xerostomia. Dry mouth is often seen as a side effect of medications that exhibit anticholinergic effects, including many psychotropic medications. The risk of xerostomia is also greater with individuals who take multiple medications. Additionally, xerostomia may be observed as a complication of chronic anxiety. Saliva contains enzymes and antibodies that control bacteria that cause oral diseases and minerals that can repair damaged enamel. Patients that are experiencing xerostomia should be encouraged to use over-the-counter oral moisturizers and fluoride mouth rinses or toothpastes. Chewing xylitol gum can stimulate saliva flow and inhibit the growth of bacteria that cause tooth decay.

Bruxism is observed as a complication of stress, anxiety disorders, traumatic brain injury, and some psychotropic medications. Left unaddressed, it can damage the teeth, leading to pain and disfigurement. It may also damage the jaw joints (temporomandibular joint dysfunction), contributing to pain. Bruxism is treated by providing patients with occlusal

guards and collaborating with their psychiatrists to address medication side effects and psychological factors.

Lastly, all individuals experiencing a mental disorder should be linked to a “dental home” for ongoing oral care. Individuals without dental insurance may be referred to nonprofit health centers or dental schools as these may provide free or low-cost services.

In engaging patients regarding oral health, psychiatrists should do so in an open-ended, nonjudgmental fashion and ask patients about any oral health concerns they may have and barriers they may be encountering to resolve them.

RESOURCE

“Association Between Mental Health and Oral Health Status and Care Utilization”

AUTHOR AND ARTICLE INFORMATION

Published online June 27, 2023.

<https://psychiatryonline.org/doi/epub/10.1176/appi.pn.2023.07.6.15>

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February—National Children's Dental Health Month



Help promote children's oral health for your pediatric patients!

- 1) **Share our English / Spanish [toolkit](#) with your social media team**
- 2) **Encourage families via [posters, flyers, and referrals](#)**

Wk 1: Your child's first dental visit -- 1st Tooth, 1st Birthday

Wk 2: Preparing for school -- Kinder Oral Health Assessments (KOHA)

Wk 3: When transportation is difficult getting to the dentist -- School Based Dental Programs

Wk 4: Healthy Habits – eating/drinking for happy smiles

Have questions or need oral health resources?

Email Oral Health Access (OHA) Santa Cruz County:

info@oralhealthscc.org

Visit our website for Santa Cruz & Monterey County Needs Assessment Data and OHA's latest Strategic Plan:

<https://oralhealthscc.org/>

Confidential support for dental professionals and their loved ones.

When you need an advocate for your physical, mental or emotional health, confidential assistance and peer-to-peer support are available 24/7.



The CDA Foundation's Wellness Program provides confidential support to CDA members facing substance use disorders and other wellness challenges including anxiety, depression and burnout. We recognize the immense pressures of the dental profession and offer a lifeline to those who need it most. Our program focuses on safeguarding both your health and your career, ensuring you receive the help you need without fear of reprisal.

In addition to supporting dentists and office staff, the program is also open to their loved ones. Wellness issues can affect the entire family, so we are here to provide guidance and support to partners, children and other immediate family members. Program resources are designed to help families navigate these challenges together, fostering a holistic approach to health and well-being.

The Wellness Program is led by compassionate volunteer members and recovering dentists with the assistance of CDA Foundation and dental society staff and allied health professionals. Volunteers are available around the clock, trained and equipped to handle your concerns with the utmost sensitivity and care, ensuring you never feel isolated in your journey toward wellness.

As a dentist, you likely balance many roles: health care provider, team leader, employer and colleague. Work-related stress can result in burnout, putting you at risk for depression, anxiety and substance misuse. Some signs that you may need support to regain balance are:

- Weight loss or gain
- Social isolation
- Insomnia
- Anxiety
- Apathy
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Thoughts of self-harm or suicide

For more information regarding the Wellness Program or for a confidential referral, please contact your local dental society or a Wellness Committee near you:

Visit cda.org/wellness-program to learn more.

Northern California
530.864.4264

**San Francisco/
Bay Area**
916.947.5676

Central California
916.947.5676

**Southern
California**
310.487.5040

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619.980.4726



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New Year, New Mindset: Navigating Dental Practice Transitions with Confidence



Cindy Harwell
Owner, Premier
Dental Consulting

**New Year,
New Mindset:
Navigating Dental
Practice Transitions
with Confidence**

A new year often brings fresh goals, renewed energy, and important decisions. In dentistry, those decisions may include hiring your first associate, purchasing a practice, opening an additional location, or beginning to think about selling a practice you've spent years building. No matter what stage of your career you're in, these transitions can be exciting, but they can also be mentally taxing.

The good news is, they don't have to be overwhelming.

With thoughtful planning and the right guidance, even complex transitions can be executed with confidence, clarity, and peace of mind. We've all heard the saying, "*When you fail to plan, you plan to fail.*" In dentistry, this often shows up during transitions that are rushed or not fully thought through, leading to unnecessary stress, financial strain, and team disruption.

I truly enjoy coming alongside dentists and their teams during these pivotal moments. Through my work, I support practices

with transitional billing, preparing a practice for sale, onboarding associate dentists for smooth integration, and providing team and cultural blending training after a practice purchase. The goal is always the same: to help dentists move through change in a way that feels organized, supported, and sustainable. Change doesn't have to mean chaos. When expectations are clear, communication is intentional, and teams feel included, transitions can actually strengthen a practice, improving morale, efficiency, and long-term success.

Have you ever considered one of these transitions? Even if you feel you're "not ready yet," it's never too early to start mapping out the path ahead. Early planning creates options, reduces uncertainty, and allows you to move forward intentionally rather than reactively, turning what could be a stressful experience into a peaceful and successful transition.

I look forward to continuing this conversation as the **speaker at the Monterey Bay Dental Society General Membership Dinner on April 9, 2026, at the Seascap Golf Club**. The evening's topic will be: **Practice Transitions: Buying, Selling, and Planning Ahead—Even If You're Not Ready Yet**

Whether a transition is coming soon or still years away, this discussion will offer practical insight, real-world guidance, and a supportive framework to help you plan with confidence.

As we move into the year ahead, I hope that we begin to see change not as something to fear, but as an opportunity to grow, evolve, and build practices that support both professional success and peace of mind.



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Cindy Hartwell
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Monterey's Dental Collaboration Platform

A secure, HIPAA-compliant way for local dentists to communicate and manage referrals.

Dear Colleagues,

I started Sindi to improve patient care and streamline communication between dentists and specialists. The platform is secure and HIPAA-compliant, making referrals and collaboration simpler and more efficient than paper pads, phone tag, or unsecured texts.

Today, the Sindi network includes 18 practices here in Monterey and hundreds of practices across the West Coast, all using the platform to send secure messages and manage digital referrals.

I'd like to personally invite you to join and see if it's helpful for your practice. Check out sindireferrals.com and Join for Free!

Brian Bhaskar DDS, MD
Monterey Oral Surgery

p.s. Feel free to reach out to me directly with any questions brian@sindireferrals.com

The screenshot displays the Sindi platform interface for an inbound referral. The top navigation bar includes the Sindi logo, a back arrow, the referral number (10537), the patient name (Tommy Tooth), the date received (09/07/2023), and a dropdown menu for the referral status (currently set to 'Consultation').

The main content area is divided into three sections:

- Referral Details:** This section contains a table with three columns: Referring Provider, Assigned Provider, and Assigned Location. The Referring Provider is Dr. Maria Salazar (Sindi Oral Surgery, 123-456-7890, maria.salazar@sindios.com). The Assigned Provider is Dr. Scott Bailey (Sindi Endodontics, 314-456-7890, scott@sunnydental.com). The Assigned Location is Dental North (69465 Wolf Walk, New Naki, 23598, 123-456-7890).
- PATIENT:** The patient's name is Tommy Tooth.
- DETAILS:** This section contains a text area for describing the consult or desired treatment. The text entered is: "Consults or Desired Treatment Eval teeth #7, 8 and 10 for RCT". Below this is a checkbox for "Urgent" (unchecked) with a note: "If unchecked, this referral will be considered routine." At the bottom of the details section is a "Location Confirmation" section with a row of 17 tooth icons (numbered 1 to 17) for selection.

On the right side of the interface is a "TIMELINE" section with a dropdown menu for "All" (selected) and buttons for "Files", "Comments", "Doctors' Notes", and "Statuses". The timeline shows a list of events:

- Dr. Maria Salazar Submitted the referral to Dr. Scott Bailey (08/11/25 9:54am)
- Jessica Jones Accepted referral. Assigned to Dr. Scott Bailey (08/11/25 9:54am)
- Phase of Care changed to Consultation (08/11/25 2:00pm)
- Status changed to Scheduled (08/11/25 4:31pm) Scheduled for Sep 1, 2022
- Status changed to Elapsed (12/18/25 4:31pm)
- Hey Dr. Salazar, we saw Tommy Tooth yesterday and he did not want to move forward with the root canal. He would like to extract the tooth (12/19/25 9:54am)
- Dr. Maria Salazar Thanks, Jessica. I'll see him next week! (12/19/25 10:06am)

At the bottom right of the timeline is a "Post" button.

Letter To Congress

HealthCare Professionals advocating for one another. This issue of the SmileLine includes a Letter penned to Congress in Spring 2025, emphasizing Mental Health support.

March 18, 2025

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Johnson, Minority Leader Jeffries, Majority Leader Thune, and Minority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the 67 undersigned organizations and the millions of dedicated physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and health care professionals across the country who have benefited from the vital support offered through the initial authorization of the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act of 2022 (“Lorna Breen Act” or “Act”), we strongly urge you to swiftly consider and pass the bipartisan Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Reauthorization Act (H.R. 929/S. 266).

Led by Representatives Debbie Dingell (D-MI), Jen Kiggans (R-VA), Jennifer McLellan (D-VA), Mariannette Miller-Meeks, MD (R-IA), Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), and Senators Tim Kaine (D-VA), Todd Young (R-IN), Jack Reed (D-RI), and Roger Marshall, MD (R-KS), both the House and Senate versions of this important reauthorization effort were marked-up and reported out of committee in the 118th Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support. Along with many other important priorities, reauthorization for this vital program was also included in the bipartisan, bicameral health agreement that was ultimately not included in the year-end continuing resolution. We ask for your leadership in ensuring this much-needed program is reauthorized and funded as soon as possible.

The Lorna Breen Act was originally enacted on March 18, 2022, and is the first and only federal law dedicated to preventing suicide and reducing occupational burnout, mental health conditions, and stress for health care professionals. It is named in honor of the life, memory, and legacy of Dr. Lorna Breen, an emergency physician who died by suicide on April 26, 2020. Dr. Breen was a sister, a daughter, a friend, a colleague, and a caregiver who was deeply dedicated to her patients. The law that carries her name was a critical first step in acknowledging and addressing the pervasive stigma and challenges – such as fear of loss of licensure or credentialing – that often prevent health care professionals from seeking the mental health services they need, causing them to suffer in silence.

Because of the Lorna Breen Act, lives have been saved and livelihoods have been protected. The Lorna Breen Act has supported more than 250,000 health workers across the country through 45 evidence-informed initiatives to strengthen health workers’ mental health. Access to mental and behavioral health support and treatment has improved and more health care employers are able to

Letter To Congress (Continued)

engage with their health care professional workforce on these issues, provide greater resources, and accelerate promising solutions. Thanks to continued advocacy work, several state licensure boards, hospitals, and health systems have also started to implement overdue changes in licensing and credentialing processes that have unintentionally contributed to the stigma associated with seeking mental health care.

But there is still much work to be done. The Lorna Breen Act has made this progress possible, but the need for the law is as great as ever. Health care professionals still face higher and increasing rates of mental health and behavioral health conditions, occupational burnout, and suicide than other professions. These factors are only worsening existing provider shortages and negatively affecting patient care, as experienced health care professionals leave the workforce in greater numbers and recruitment and retention of future generations becomes more and more difficult. We must continue to prioritize the health and well-being of those who care for us, ensuring an environment where each and every health care professional always has access to the necessary mental health care services they need and deserve, without fear of loss of licensure, loss of income, or threat of other meaningful career setbacks associated with the stigma of getting the help they need.

The Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Reauthorization Act will help ensure that hospitals, health systems, and other health care organizations can continue, expand, and build on the successes seen with numerous initiatives funded by the Act. Moreover, the reauthorization measure importantly expands grants and contracts eligibility to include entities that have “a focus on the reduction of administrative burden on health care workers.” This will enable health care organizations to address system-level risk factors that lead to occupational burnout, contribute to mental health conditions, and cause intensive stress and strain. Excessive administrative burden and workflow inefficiencies overload already stretched-thin health care professionals and such pressures can compromise patient care and interfere with the patient-clinician relationship. When health care professionals have the care they need and deserve they are able to continue to provide high quality care to the individuals, families, and communities they serve.

Once again, we respectfully ask for your leadership to ensure the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act is reauthorized and funded as soon as possible. We are grateful for your continued commitment to the physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and all health care professionals who continue to serve our communities every day. When we support the individuals who comprise our nation’s health care workforce, we ensure that patients have optimal care and that our health care system can thrive. Please know we stand ready to work with you and your colleagues to help secure enactment of the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Reauthorization Act.

Sincerely,

American College of Emergency Physicians
Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes' Foundation
American Academy of Emergency Medicine
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Nursing
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Critical-Care Nurses
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Nurse Practitioners
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons

American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American College of Cardiology
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American College of Physicians
American College of Radiology
American College of Rheumatology
American College of Surgeons
American Dental Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Medical Association
American Nurses Association
American Organization for Nursing Leadership
American Osteopathic Association

Continued next page

Letter To Congress (Continued)

American Physical Therapy Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association Services
American Society for Radiation Oncology
American Society of Anesthesiologists
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery
American Society of Health-System Pharmacists
American Society of Transplant Surgeons
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
American Urological Association
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine
AMGA
Association for Clinical Oncology
Association of American Medical Colleges
Caregiver Action Network
Children's Hospital Association
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
Corporate Counseling Associates
Emergency Nurses Association
Envision Healthcare
FIGS
Intealth
Johnson & Johnson
Mental Health America
Moral Injury of Healthcare
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Boards of Pharmacy

National Association of Community Health Centers
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Athletic Trainers Association
National Consumers League
National Hispanic Health Foundation
National Hispanic Medical Association
National League for Nursing
National Minority Quality Forum
PBI Education
Renal Physicians Association
Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions
Society for Vascular Surgery
Society of Gynecologic Oncology
Sutter Health
The Society of Thoracic Surgeons
cc: The Honorable John Barrasso, Senate Republican Whip
The Honorable Steve Scalise, House Majority Leader
The Honorable Brett Guthrie, Chair, House Energy and Commerce Committee
The Honorable Frank Pallone, Ranking Member, House Energy and Commerce Committee
The Honorable Bill Cassidy, MD, Chair, Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee
The Honorable Bernie Sanders, Ranking Member, Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee



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How Dental Health and Mental Health Are Connected



Psychiatry.org - How Dental Health and Mental Health Are Connected— September 19, 2023

Healthy living for mental well-being, Older adults, Patients and Families

While it may not be widely understood, there is a clear connection between a person's dental health and their mental health. Numerous studies have identified associations between mental health and oral health, however, the interaction often does not get much attention, even among health care professionals. Writing in a recent *Psychiatric News* article, Antoinette V. Shappell, M.D., Pierre M. Cartier, D.M.D., M.P.H., note that “*psychiatrists well understand the need to be aware of all of their patient’s health issues, but sometimes oral health gets overlooked.*”

Shappell and Cartier point out the various ways in which oral health and mental health are interconnected, each having an impact on the other. **Dental health problems can impact a person’s quality of life and exacerbate mental health problems.**

For example:

- When a person has poor oral health, it can impact their eating, speech and self-esteem and lead to reduced social interactions, further harming mental well-being.
- Many people, including people with mental health conditions, have anxiety associated with dental care and procedures and avoid needed care, but chronic oral pain can contribute to poor mental health and make treating mental health conditions more difficult.
- Symptoms of mental illnesses can contribute to poor nutrition which in turn contributes to poor dental health.
- People with mental illness, particularly those experiencing symptoms of serious mental illness, may have difficulty maintaining an effective daily dental care routine and accessing needed dental treatment.

Shappell and Cartier highlight four key dental conditions seen in patients with psychiatric disorders: tooth decay, gum diseases, dry mouth (xerostomia), and teeth grinding (bruxism). Dry mouth

How Dental Health and Mental Health Are Connected (Continued)

can be a complication of anxiety and is a side effect of many psychotropic medications. They suggest that over-the-counter products (such as oral moisturizers, mouth rinses, toothpaste or xylitol gum) can be helpful for dry mouth. Teeth grinding, which can damage teeth and contribute to teeth and jaw pain, is treated by wearing a night guard and working with a psychiatrist to address medication side effects and psychological factors. Therapy can be helpful if a person is extremely anxious about going to the dentist.

Oral Health and Dementia

Oral health is of particular concern for older adults. Poor oral health is common in people with dementia who may have difficulty with daily routines or engaging in more comprehensive oral care. In addition, research has associated periodontal disease and tooth loss with a higher risk for dementia. New research shows a link between gum disease and the formation of amyloid plaque associated with Alzheimer's disease. *"The mouth is part of the body and if you don't take care of oral inflammation and infection, you cannot really prevent systemic diseases, like Alzheimer's,"* study co-author Alpdogan Kantarci, D.D.S., MSc, Ph.D. told Science Daily.

Shappell and Cartier offer some suggestions for prevention and care for older adults.

- Individuals who are at risk for neuro-degenerative disorders should seek regular comprehensive oral care, including preventive dental visits.
- People who are missing teeth should have them replaced with dental implants or dentures. Replacing missing teeth can improve nutrition and quality of life and reduce the risk for physical and mental decline.
- People with more advanced dementia can benefit from efforts to maintain oral comfort and prevent acute dental conditions.

They also emphasize the importance of collaboration among the entire health care team including dentists, physicians, social workers, mental health professionals, and others, with attention to dental health and mental health.

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3. Tawari, T., et al. 2022. [Association Between Mental Health and Oral Health Status and CareUtilization.](#) Frontiers in Oral Health, February 2022, Volume 2, <https://doi.org/10.3389/froh.2021.732882>.

Photo: iStock/ Pollyana Ventura

“There is hope, even when your brain tells you there isn't.”

— John Green

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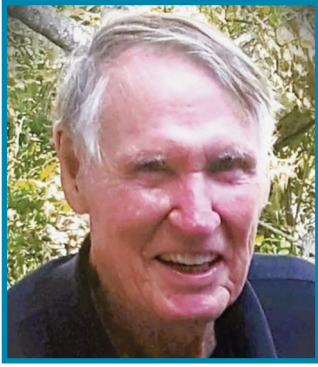
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Donald Burnett, DDS

Don Burnett, 89, a resident of the Carmel Highlands, passed away peacefully at Community Hospital on June 6, 2023. He had been blessed with many visits from friends and family in his last days. Don spent his early years in Nebraska and moved to

Southern California with his mother, Maxine, for high school, where he played football and, most importantly, met the love of his life, Linda, to whom he was married for 69 years.

Don then went to USC for dental school. Don enjoyed being a dentist and growing the practice that became the Monterey Peninsula Dental Group. He was a proud USC Alumni and supporter of Trojan football, in good times and bad. The tailgate parties with his dental group at Stanford were legendary.

Don was always active. He loved skiing with friends (what happens Heli skiing in Minden, stays in Minden) and family, hiking, and windsurfing. Don was an avid windsurfer, frequently being blown out to sea in Maui!!! Don treasured his pals, whether playing dominoes at the Pacheco club, where he served a term as president, playing high finance with the Wild Turkeys investment club, trying not to get lost on hikes with his hiking club, or just fishing with his best friend, Merv Sutton.

Don loved his children Lisa and Jeff and showed it by being patient (mostly) through driving lessons, many fender benders, horses, and all that goes with being a dad. Once Lisa and Jeff were in college, he told the story that he had walked the house missing them since it was too quiet.

Don also had a special relationship with his grandson, Quinn Burnett Murdy. They hiked and hung out together. PopPop (Don) rarely missed watching Quinn play football. Quinn credits Don as his inspiration for starting his own business out of college.

Don pretended to not like pets, but had many, including Tinkerbelle, the cat who adopted him, and Huckleberry, the hound who would tree scuba divers on rocks thinking they were seals.

Don was blessed with many wonderful friends and neighbors (too many to mention for risk of missing someone), as well as his wonderful caregiver and “best buddy,” Tai Hautau.

Don is survived by his wife, Linda Burnett, daughter Lisa Burnett Murdy (Jim), and grandson Quinn Burnett Murdy. He was predeceased by his son Jeff Burnett. Donations in Don’s memory may be made to the Parkinson’s Foundation (parkinsons.org).

“ *Often it’s the deepest pain which
empowers you to grow
into your highest self.* ”

— Karen Salmansohn



Edward Ballengee, DDS

Our dear Dad, Edward Ballengee went to join our beautiful mother, Mary Ballengee, on September 2 at the family ranch in Pine Canyon. Mary recently passed away on August 13 - they deeply loved each other! Edward Louis Ballengee was born and raised in Taft, California, where he became an excellent trombonist, and felt the call to pursue a career in dentistry. He attended Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington, where he met and fell in love with Mary as they performed the lead opposite each other in the romantic musical, "South Pacific", and they were married in 1957.

They lived a busy and wonderful life together for 66 years. After Ed completed dental school in San Francisco, he served two years in the Army Dental Corps at Fort Ord. When stationed at Fort Hunter Liggett, Ed fell in love with the King City area and moved to King City in 1963 to practice for 57 years alongside Moylen Peterson, DDS. In 1965, they bought the ranch and moved to Pine Canyon.

Ed excelled as a dentist and passionately loved his profession and his patients! He provided such pain-free, high-standard dentistry, and compassionate, patient care that he acquired a myriad of happy, loyal patients over the years. He was famous for humming as he worked, said that God ran his dental practice, and was always praying throughout his dental procedure.

Dad and mom also had a great passion for music and singing. Dad served as choir director for the Community Baptist Church for 20 years and often directed Handel's Messiah. Ed and Mary sang with the Camerata Singers for 26 years, the Carmel Bach Festival for 6 years, and I Cantori de Carmel as

well. Mary and Ed have fond memories of participating in two European singing tours. Dad especially loved to sing the "Lord's Prayer" at funerals of friends and patients who asked him (often marking the promise on the dental record so he wouldn't forget.)

Ed and Mary were constantly contributing to the local community in so many areas. Ed was the president of the Chamber of Commerce in 1969. I think he has served as president of almost every organization in town. He served on the King City elementary school board from 1976 to 1979. He was president of the KCHS Mustang Bench in 1979 to 1980. He also was a Rotary member for 60 years -serving as president from 1979 to 1980. For his rotary service, he received the Paul Harris fellow award seven times and in 2022 was awarded the Ruby Harris fellow award -highest attainable. He was the "Citizen of the Year" in 1979, and "Father of the Year" as well.

With the establishing president, Janette Hall Harkness, Ed and Mary worked tirelessly to preserve the Stanton Theater at King City High School, helping her to establish the SoMoCo Center for the Performing Arts and serving also as president.

Ed and Mary greatly enjoyed ranch and family life, especially enjoying time with their daughters and grandkids: hiking, fishing, horseback riding, and waterskiing at San Antonio Lake and attending their activities. A frequent highlight was the family vacations on horseback with pack mules in the back country of the Los Padres National Forest often accompanied by Charles Harriman. In the backcountry, Ed and Mary even packed fingerling trout on mules to plant in streams and often did trail work when needed.

Ed and Mary were truly champions of public service -always looking for an opportunity to help out- and were loving and generous as parents and grandparents. They were inseparable to the end.

Ed is survived by one sister, Vonda Brown and her husband Bill; two daughters: Paulette and her husband, Jim Scoville, and Mimi and her husband, John Black, nine grandsons, and ten great grandchildren, with three more on the way.

Ed and Mary were beloved to many as kind, generous, and sacrificial contributors to the King City area. They will be greatly missed by all of us!!



David Robert Madsen, DDS

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of David R Madsen. David (Bob) was a beloved husband, father, friend, and community member. He was born on October 29, 1929 in Logan, UT to David E Madsen and Anna Mir. Thereafter, his family moved to San Jose, CA where he attended San Jose High School and then San Jose State University. During college he remained active in student affairs and enjoyed serving on the student council. He served as President of Blue Key Honor Society and was a member of Delta Upsilon Fraternity. When he had one remaining year of graduate studies in science education, he enlisted in the US Navy and went to OCS to be commissioned Line Officer.



Bob served on a destroyer based out of Pearl Harbor, the USS Epperson 719. He was favorably discharged in 1956 having experienced two Korean tours and Operation Castle (H Bomb tests). LTJG Madsen met a lovely lady

from Wisconsin who was working as a Medical Technician at Queen's Hospital in Honolulu, HI. On February 5, 1955 Bob and Ann were married at the Pearl Harbor Submarine Base Chapel. They lived in Waikiki near the beach for their first year, eventually moving to the mainland and settling in Aptos, CA.

Upon release from the Navy, Bob graduated from Marquette Dental School in 1960. He had an internship as an officer in the US Public Health Service in Chicago and later for the PHS

Hospital in San Francisco. Bob set up private practice in Santa Cruz in 1962, joining the Santa Cruz Dental Group. "Dr. Bob" as he was lovingly known to many, thoroughly enjoyed his practice of dentistry and relating with his patients and co-workers.

In 1970, Bob and Ann were blessed to become parents to their son, David. Bob was a devoted family man, and Ann and David were the light of his life. He cherished his time with his family, creating lasting memories with them. Upon retiring from his dental practice in 2003, he enjoyed snow skiing, gardening, attending Lions meetings and a poor game of golf.

He was very active in the Cabrillo Host Lions Club and served many years holding various offices for over 40 years. His vivacious spirit and love for life, family and friends were an inspiration to all who knew him.

Bob is survived by his beloved son, David and his wife Amye. He will be deeply missed by his family, and all who had the privilege of knowing him. We take comfort in knowing that his legacy will live on through the memories he created, the lives he touched, and the positive impact he made on the world. and volunteering as a supervising doctor for a dental student mission trip to Moala Fiji are just a few examples of his resolve for improving the quality of life for others.

With his marriage to Vicki Belkin-Kondo, he lovingly expanded his family with Tamara, Aron, Adar and Saadiah.

Gerry and Vicki enjoyed traveling together, hosting elaborate parties, organizing Giants tailgates, and attending events with Temple Beth El and their Havurah. He was an avid Bay Area sports fan and held season tickets for many years for the Giants, Warriors, and 49ers. His favorite pastime was fly fishing and he would even tie his own flies for his many fishing trips with friends, family or notable with "The Boys." Gerry was always humble about his many accomplishments, but he was always proud to share stories about his children and grandchildren's latest achievements. His kindness and passion for living life to its fullest will be remembered and unequaled.



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— Anne Lamott

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Please contact us should you have an interest in exploring this further.

Sincerely,

Peter Wang (831) 676-6332 or (831) 392-1000

Min Zhao (831) 676-6183

Email: wwdds@att.net



“Healing takes time,
and asking for help
is a courageous step.”

— Mariska Hargitay

Parting Shot



PHOTO: DR. CARL SACKETT— *Need a Mental Health Break?* A trip to the ocean never hurts. And the *positive ions* are sure to put you in a good mood!

“ *It’s the idea that people living close to nature tend to be noble. It’s seeing all those sunsets that does it. You can’t watch a sunset and then go off and set fire to your neighbor’s tepee. Living close to nature is wonderful for your mental health.* ”

— Daniel Quinn