

TDA TODAY

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Shaping the Future of Dental Care in Texas: TDA's Legislative Priorities for 2025

As the 89th Texas Legislative Session reaches its midpoint, the Texas Dental Association (TDA) is keeping a close eye on the slow progress in the House, where few bills have passed. While the Senate is moving forward smoothly, any new law must pass both chambers. Despite the gridlock, TDA's Legislative Team continues to push forward with advocacy for issues that matter most to Texas dentists. Currently, TDA is monitoring 468 bills that could affect the dental field, with 58 marked as key priorities. Here's where things stand on major issues:

- **Medicaid Dental Fee Increases**
After in-depth discussions with House budget leaders, the Health and Human Services Commission, and others involved in Medicaid dentistry, TDA is hopeful that a boost in dental reimbursement rates may be within reach.
- **Stopping Insurance Downcoding**
Senate Bill 1090, filed by Sen Bryan Hughes (R-Tyler) at TDA's request, aims to stop state-regulated dental plans from reducing reimbursement through bundling and downcoding. The bill is currently with the Senate Health and Human Services Committee.
- **Improving Access to Oral Health**
House Bill 1776, introduced by Rep Briscoe Cain (R-Deer Park), would require that the state's Oral Health Improvement Program be led by a licensed Texas dentist. The bill was recently heard in the House Public Health Committee.
- **Allowing Cosmetic Use of Neuromodulators by Dentists**
Senate Bill 1117, by Sen Charles Schwertner (R-Georgetown), would allow any Texas-licensed dentist to use botulinum toxin (or equivalents) for cosmetic purposes—provided they complete approved training. The bill is now in the Senate Business and Commerce Committee.

TDA is opposing House Bill 1803, which proposes joining a licensure compact for dentists and hygienists. On March 31, Dr Matt Roberts testified for TDA against the bill, citing concerns about patient safety and the unnecessary nature of the compact.

To stay informed, check out *The Root*, TDA's legislative newsletter. The latest issue was sent out on April 8.

TDA's legislative strength depends on member involvement. Consider supporting these efforts by joining DENPAC or becoming a key contact dentist. For more info, contact Staci Rives at srives@tda.org.



Second Annual TDA Leadership Institute a Success

The TDA Leadership Institute (TLI) kicked off its second program year in Rockwall, Texas, on April 11-12, 2025. TLI focuses on dentists identified as emerging leaders and influencers within their communities, who could serve as mentors to their peers and a role models for dental students. This exclusive member-only program is designed to develop a growing network of leaders to advance organized dentistry and oral health in their respective communities. The graduating class provides mentorship throughout the next year to the incoming leaders.

Graduating class members presented capstone projects completed throughout their year, with the incoming class presenting their future project ideas. Look for projects to be featured in future issues of the *TDA Today* and the *Texas Dental Journal*.



Outgoing class members: Drs Eva Boldridge, Blake Hutzler, Heather Blackmond, Sonali Demla, Dhara Shah, and Naser Rezaei.



Incoming class members: Drs Ashla Martin, Sam Asthana, Christina Mueller, Sima Habrawi, Tammeka Nickleberry.



Dr Blake Hutzler presents his project to the group. Dr Hutzler's project focused on preparing D4 students for the TSBDE Licensing Expo.



Dr Naser Rezaei takes a selfie of the entire group.



The original task force and mentor group: Dr Akshay Thusu, Dr Kerin Burdette, Lee Ann Johnson, CAE, Dr Elsa Flores, Dr Laji James, and Dr Carmen Smith.



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Dental School Digest—Texas A&M University College of Dentistry



Dr Liang Hong Named Head of Public Health Sciences

Dr Liang Hong joined Texas A&M University College of Dentistry recently as the new department head of public health sciences. In December, he was named a Faculty Fellow of the Texas A&M Institute for Healthcare Access.

Before joining A&M Dentistry, Hong was professor and director in the Division of Community Dentistry at the University of Tennessee HSC College of Dentistry and professor in UTHSC College of Graduate Health Sciences and UTHSC College of Medicine, Department of Preventive Medicine. He maintained a

general dentistry practice and treated a variety of patients, including oncology patients at the Special Care Clinic.

“This dental school, the location – the Dallas area and the state of Texas – provides huge opportunities to pursue my professional goal of improving the oral health and access to dental care of the public,” he said. “Oral health indicators in Texas are behind the national average and the objectives of Healthy People 2030. There’s a lot of work to be done here.”

Dr Lily Garcia, dean, said Hong has the professional demeanor and experience to advance the departmental staff and faculty through a deliberate focus on dental public health curriculum for the predoctoral and dental hygiene students.

“He has quickly learned the vital role that the faculty contribute to A&M Dentistry clinical outreach,” she said.

Dr John K. Neubert Takes the Leadership Reins of Biomedical Sciences

Texas A&M College of Dentistry welcomed Dr John K. Neubert on February 1 as the new department head of biomedical sciences.

Dr Neubert joined the dental college after more than 20 years on the University of Florida faculty, including several years as the director of predoctoral orthodontic education. A translational researcher, his work is recognized worldwide.

“I am so pleased Dr. Neubert joined our faculty,” said Dr Lily T. García, dean. “He comes with the expertise, academic experience and a successful track record in protocol-driven research. He is focused on engaging our faculty members in the Department of Biomedical Sciences as we work together to advance the mission of the A&M College of Dentistry.”

Neubert said moving into an administrative role is a natural step after many years as a researcher, clinician and teacher. His background is in neuroscience, pain research and therapeutics, and he pursued a leadership role at the dental college because he wanted to focus more on leading a basic science and research program.

“Even though I’m a dentist and an orthodontist, I consider myself a researcher and academic,” Neubert said. “I saw the position posted for biomedical sciences and that seemed like a more natural fit for me as far as what I want to do.”



Dr Jacqueline Plemons Tapped for Inaugural Role as Executive Director of External Affairs

Dr Jacqueline Plemons was named as the inaugural executive director of external affairs at the College of Dentistry.

Dr Plemons is an alumna of Baylor College of Dentistry (BCOD '86) earning her DDS, Certificate in Periodontics, and MS in Oral Biology/Dentistry. She is a clinical professor, diplomate of the American Board of Periodontology, and director of the Stomatology Clinic services division.

Joining A&M College of Dentistry full-time, she will be responsible for identification and development of collaborative education opportunities in alignment with the mission of the school, provide oversight and approval, and coordinate with the Office of General Council when reviewing affiliation agreements in support of our programs, among other roles. In addition to this full-time faculty position, Dr Plemons will continue her work in teaching and managing the stomatology services. ■

Texas Mission of Mercy (TMOM) Brazos Valley 2025: A Life-Changing Weekend of Free Dental Care

Texas Mission of Mercy, Inc. held a 40-chair TMOM event on February 21-22 in the Brazos Valley. TMOM Brazos treated 705 patients and provided \$723, 159 worth of care.

Co-chaired by Drs Jennifer Hathaway and Delton Yarbrough, it was a powerful demonstration of community, compassion, and care, bringing together hundreds of volunteers and dental professionals, including dentists, hygienists, dental assistants, and general support staff, to provide life-changing oral health services to those in need.

The mobile dental clinic was set up at Christ Church, offering free extractions, fillings, cleanings, and other critical dental treatments to hundreds of underserved Texans who might not otherwise have access to care.

Pre-screening events were hosted at The Bridge Ministries and Health For All Clinic, ensuring that patients most in need of care were prioritized and prepared ahead of the event. This proactive approach streamlined the treatment process and allowed TMOM to maximize its impact over the 2-day clinic.

Future TMOM's are July 18-19, in Abilene and September 26-27 in Houston. For more information on volunteering or sponsoring, please visit tdasf.org. ■



COMPONENT CORNER

Each month, we aim to spotlight a state component society and the events happening in the area. For more information or to let us know what is happening in your TDA component society, please email Managing Editor Nicole Scott, nscott@tda.org.

SPOTLIGHT: Dallas County Dental Society

Fueling the Mind & Body: A Transformative Workshop on Longevity and Nutrition

In early March, dentists from across North Texas gathered at the DCDS Executive Office for an engaging and informative session led by Meridan Zerner, a registered dietitian nutritionist from the Cooper Clinic. The ADA-sponsored workshop, *Fueling the Mind & Body: Recipe for Longevity*, provided attendees with cutting-edge insights on how nutrition impacts cognitive function, cardiovascular health and overall longevity.

Zerner highlighted the importance of anti-inflammatory foods, essential nutrients and the gut-brain connection, equipping participants with actionable strategies to enhance both daily performance and long-term wellness. Attendees explored the science behind intermittent fasting, oxidative stress reduction and the best dietary approaches for sustained energy and mental clarity.

The session sparked meaningful discussions, with many participants eager to implement healthier habits in both their personal and professional lives. With such a positive response, DCDS looks forward to hosting more wellness-focused events in the future. ■



Meridan Zerner welcomes attendees to the workshop.



Meridan Zerner discusses the benefits of sleep in mental health.

TDA Perks Program Signature Sponsors Help Bring Back the 80s to TDA Meeting

This May at TDA Meeting, be prepared for a totally awesome experience, where you, your team, and family can go back to the 80s!

Dig out your acid-washed denim and book it to the Exhibit Hall at 4:30 p.m., Thursday, May 8 for a totally tubular time at the “I Want My TDA Totally 80s” Party!

A very special thanks to TDA Perks Program’s 2025 Signature Sponsors for helping make the festivities possible, including the star attraction—a genuine DeLorean decked out like Marty McFly’s time-traveling ride in “Back to the Future!”

Please stop by their booths and say “hello!” You’ll find them in the TDA Perks Program Aisle (600):

DentalHQ (Booth TBD) lets you create, manage, and grow your in-house membership plan program with the leading platform for successful membership plans.

OSHA Review, Inc. (Booth 625) enables you to test your sterilizer weekly for \$169/year with its Spore Check System. Its SUV Ultra 5’s powerful and cost-effective formula lets you clean and disinfect operatories.

Sedation Resource (Booth 600) is customer-focused and has reasonable prices and an extensive line of sedation equipment and supplies.

TDA Financial Services Insurance Program (Booth 619) is now TDA-member owned! Get health, business; and personal, home and auto coverage with help from experienced, knowledgeable staff.

Enjoy complimentary appetizers and the cash bar (every attendee receives 1 free drink ticket on their name badge), while you groove to an 80s playlist.

And you won’t be able to miss the roller-skating rink (all skating equipment will be provided) and video arcade (with classic arcade games like Pac-Man) that will take up swaths of the floor on Thursday and Friday. 📧



Georganne P. McCandless, DDS
TDA President, 2024-2025

One Big Thing: Membership Matters

It has been my great honor to be your TDA president and to work on behalf of our beloved profession. As I have traveled the state proudly representing you as your president, one thing has been apparent: membership in organized dentistry and our shared experiences as essential health care providers does matter. Dentistry can be hard in the best of ways. And when we come together in our various roundtables we can share our experiences and help one another.

Why it Matters: As mental health and well being in our profession has moved to the forefront, membership in our association is even more important today. One is but the loneliest number. When dental professionals come together in an organized way with one big voice, the dividends are innumerable. The benefits of membership in a professional association have long been reported on. It can not only improve personal and professional growth but can lead to opportunities unseen. Such benefits include:

- Opening yourself up to new professional possibilities—like becoming TDA president.
- Being a part of a larger community that not only understands you, but can support you in every way.
- Mentorship
- Fellowship
- The ability to influence and direct the future of our profession
- Tangible benefits like affordable health care, CE opportunities, partnerships with endorsed vendors, political advocacy.

The Big Picture: There is plenty of hidden value in organized dentistry. There are plenty of tangible benefits in organized dentistry. But what there is not is plenty of active participation by our members. So as I end my year as your president, I would challenge you, what are you giving to your profession?

- Are you participating in your local components?
- Are you inviting your friends to these meetings?
- Are you saying yes to a leadership position?
- Are you offering to be an ear to listen to our younger colleagues?

Giving to your profession and receiving are different things and I promise you that what you give to your profession will give back to you 10 times over. Our members are the ties that bind our association together and I have been the beneficiary of our shared experiences.

Thank you for that! 📧

Two Texas Dentists Among the ADA’s 2025 10 Under 10 Award Winners

Two of the 10 dentists who were recognized in March with the ADA 10 Under 10 Award are from Texas. Congratulations to Drs Sara Ehsani of Dallas and Akshay Thusu of San Antonio!

The ADA New Dentist Committee developed the award in 2017, which recognizes 10 amazing dentists who graduated from a dental school accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation less than 10 years ago. According to the ADA, the dentists demonstrate excellence and inspire others in science, research and education, practice excellence, philanthropy, leadership, and advocacy.

The award winners who were announced and celebrated at the award ceremony in Washington, D.C. are: Drs Sara Ehsani of Texas, Adam Lowenstein of Massachusetts, Craig McKenzie of Pennsylvania, Kathryn Pawlak of New York, Eddie Ramirez of Oregon, Allison C. Scully of Indiana, Lyubov Daniilovna Slashcheva of Minnesota, Akshay Thusu of Texas, Yi-Chu Wu of Ohio, and Lauren C. Yap of Pennsylvania.

To read more about Drs Eshani and Thusu, please visit ada.org. 📧



Dr Sara Ehsani



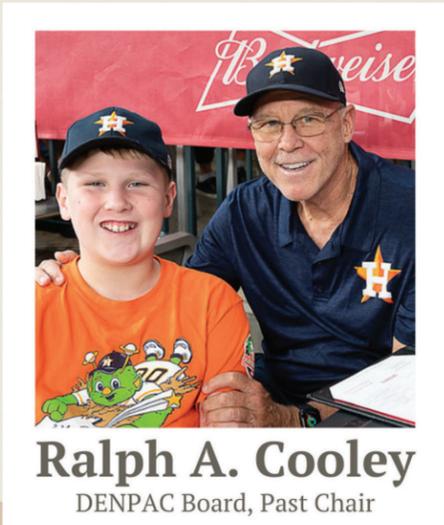
Dr Akshay Thusu

DENPAC SPOTLIGHT

Component: Brazos Valley Dental Society

Specialty: General Dentistry

Dental School: UTHealth Houston School of Dentistry, Assistant Dean of Admissions/Student Services



Ralph A. Cooley
DENPAC Board, Past Chair

“I am involved so that future generations of Texas dentists can provide the best care for patients and guide legislators to make positive decisions for their constituents.”

If you don’t speak for dentistry, who will?

DENPAC supports candidates for state office who support dentists and patients.

We need your investment.



Ready to **do your part?**

Visit DENPAC.org to make an investment online.

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TSBDE Rule Update

This recurring section is designed to help TDA members keep up with important Texas State Board of Dental Examiners (TSBDE) rules, other regulations, and state law affecting their practices.

The following Texas State Board of Dental Examiners (TSBDE) rule adoptions were published on March 7, 2025, in the *Texas Register* with an effective date of March 13, 2025.

22 Texas Administrative Code §113.2, X-Ray Laboratories

The amended rule removes the requirement that dental patients must be protected by a lead apron with thyroid collar. The American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology (AAOMR) issued guidelines titled "Patient Shielding During Dentomaxillofacial Radiography" where the AAOMR recommended discontinuing the use of lead aprons and thyroid shields when making X-rays. The Board held a stakeholder meeting on September 27, 2024, where most stakeholders stated that Board rules should be amended to remove requiring the use of lead aprons and thyroid shields based on the AAOMR guidelines.

22 Texas Administrative Code §108.42, Obtaining a Permit

The amended rule removes the requirement that a mobile dental facility or portable dental unit must have a lead apron with thyroid shield when x-rays are made. The AAOMR issued guidelines titled "Patient Shielding During Dentomaxillofacial Radiography" where the AAOMR

recommended discontinuing the use of lead aprons and thyroid shields when making X-rays. The Board held a stakeholder meeting on September 27, 2024, where most stakeholders stated that Board rules should be amended to remove requiring the use of lead aprons and thyroid shields based on the AAOMR guidelines.

22 Texas Administrative Code §111.1, Additional Continuing Education Required

The amended rule removes subsection (a) and paragraph (b)(1) because they are no longer in effect. The current continuing education requirement regarding controlled substances is found in paragraph (1) of this amended rule and in 22 Texas Administrative Code §104.1(2)(B). The proposed amendment also updates the title for 22 Texas Administrative Code §104.1.

22 Texas Administrative Code §114.12, Continuing Education for Certificate Holders

The amendment updates the rule to reflect that dental assistant registrations have a biennial renewal cycle.

For more information on the TSBDE, please contact TDA Senior Policy Manager Diane Rhodes at 512-443-3675 ext. 122, drhodes@tda.org.



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Alliance of the TDA Schedule of Events at TDA Meeting

All active and inactive members of the Alliance of the TDA (ATDA) are welcome to scheduled events at Grand Hyatt Hotel in downtown San Antonio. If you haven't received your registration by email or have questions, email ATDAannualsession@gmail.com.

Thursday May 8, 2025

8:30AM - 4:00 PM Registration
Presidio A, 3rd Floor
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM ATDA Committee Meetings
President's Suite TBA
10:00 AM - 5:PM Iconic Shopping Boutique
(All Welcome)
Presidio A, 3rd Floor
12:15 PM - 1:45 PM Past President's Lunch
(By invitation only)
Presidio C, 3rd Floor
2:30 PM - 4:30 PM Trivia for Fun!
Presidio B, 3rd Floor
All are welcome, register at tdameeting.com, event code #T42, \$45
6:30 PM - 8:30 PM ATDA President's Reception
(by invitation only)
Presidio B & C, 3rd Floor

Friday May 9, 2025

8:30 AM - 9:30 AM Executive Board
Breakfast Meeting
Presidio B & C, 3rd Floor
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM Registration
Presidio A
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM Prefunction, 3rd Floor
Iconic Shopping Boutique
Presidio A, 3rd Floor
9:45 AM - 11:45 AM *ATDA General Meeting
(all members welcome)
(Morning Session)
Presidio B & C, 3rd Floor
Dental School Student
Scholarship Lunch
(ticketed event, \$65)
Bowie B & C, 2nd Floor
Noon - 1:30 PM

1:45 PM - 3:00 PM

*General Meeting (continued)
Afternoon Session
Presidio B & C, 3rd Floor
Installation of ATDA 2024-2025 Officers
2024-25 Exec Board Orientation
Presidio C, 3rd Floor

Saturday, May 10, 2025

8:00 AM ATDA President's Address to House of Delegates,
Convention Center, 3rd Floor

Iconic Shopping Boutique

Sponsored by ATDA at the Grand Hyatt Hotel
Scan QR Code for Vendors



DENTAL SCHOOL ADMISSIONS PANEL

Calling all Pre-dental students! Don't miss this unique Q&A session with admissions officers from top dental schools. Get insider tips on the application process and have your questions answered directly by the experts. Room host volunteers during the TDA Meeting receive free admission to the panel. Scan the QR code below to learn more!

Event Code: F42
Time: Friday, May 9, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm
Fee: \$25 (FREE for room host volunteers!)

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

