

# Association Affairs

## The American Dental Association: Status Changed from an Associated to an Affiliated Society, AAAS

THE American Dental Association, which was founded Aug. 3, 1859, at Niagara Falls, N.Y., by a group of 26 dentists, is today the largest professional organization of dentists in the world. At the end of Oct., 1953, the total membership included 70,029 U.S. dentists and nearly 10,000 dental students, representing approximately 80 percent of all dentists in the nation. The Association has 54 constituent (state and territorial) dental societies that carry on active programs. The Central Office of the Association is at 222 East Superior St., Chicago, where 117 of its 131 full-time employees are stationed. An office is also maintained in Washington, D.C.

Leslie M. FitzGerald, of Dubuque, Iowa, is president of the Association. Other officers are: Daniel F. Lynch, president-elect; Walter J. Pryor, Cleveland, first vice president; Charles A. Pankow, Buffalo, N.Y., second vice president; Hollis O. Warrick, Enid, Okla., third vice president; Harry Lyons, Richmond, Va., speaker of the House of Delegates; Harold Hillenbrand, Chicago, secretary; H. B. Washburn, St. Paul, Minn., treasurer; and Lon W. Morrey, Chicago, editor.

The Association carries on a nation-wide program of activities "to encourage the improvement of the health of the public and to promote the art and science of dentistry." Supported by an annual budget of nearly 2,000,000 dollars, these activities are so extensive that only a brief mention of a few can be made here. Over-all policies are established by the House of Delegates, composed of representatives of each constituent dental society. Fiscal managements are handled by a 13-member board of trustees. There are 18 permanent councils and a number of bureaus and departments which carry on specific functions.

A typical program of an A.D.A. agency in providing services for the public and for members of the dental profession is that of the Council on Dental Therapeutics. It tests and analyzes drugs and materials offered to dentists by commercial manufacturers and provides detailed reports to the profession; also it evaluates evidence for therapeutic claims of dentifrices, mouth washes, and other products sold directly to the public. Through these activities, both the dentist and the public are provided protection against inferior, worthless, or harmful products.

The Council on Dental Education, which inspects accredited dental schools, carries on an extensive program of dental aptitude testing which now is being used by every dental school in the nation. These tests are given to applicants for admission to dental schools, and the test scores have been a major factor in sharply reducing the loss of students through academic failures.

Specific instances of long-continued interest in research is illustrated by a reference to the work of

the Council on Dental Research. Two groups of Association fellows are maintained, at the National Bureau of Standards and at the National Institutes of Health. The fellowship staff at the National Bureau of Standards, established a quarter of a century ago, now totals 10 and consists of 2 dentists, a chemical engineer, a physical chemist, a metallurgist, a chemist, a crystallographer (on leave of absence at the University of Liège), and 3 technical and clerical assistants. This research program has received overwhelming acceptance here and abroad and has resulted in far-reaching changes in the selection and use of materials in dental therapy. The Association fellowship program at the National Institutes of Health was established Sept., 1941. There a biochemist is studying the relation of various protein diets to the incidence of experimental dental caries. A bacterial physiologist is investigating the effect of diets and chemical additives on the oral flora of experimental animals. The original study in oral spirochetology, conducted by a dental microbiologist, is now in its 12th year and has added much knowledge to this particular field.

The Bureau of Economic Research and Statistics carries on continuing studies and surveys related to dental practice, dental income, distribution of dentists, and similar data of considerable interest to the profession, the dental trades, and government.

Each year the Association sponsors numerous conferences dealing with specific problems. Recently there was a conference designed to set minimum standards in reporting clinical dental caries research, held Nov. 2-3. The need for quantitative expression and critical appraisal is especially important in studies concerned with testing the efficacy of nutritional agents, dentifrices, and antibiotics. In Feb., 1953, 26 scientists, both from dentistry and from associated disciplines, were assigned to one or the other of 7 committees: type of index of dental caries experience; standardization of dental examinations; methods for the control of variables; use of laboratory tests in a clinical study; conduct of the investigation; analysis of data and evaluation of the results; and principles of publication. After months of study, these groups met and outlined standards that should help future investigators in achieving a higher degree of accuracy and in the reporting of studies relatively comparable with similar studies of others.

The outstanding obligation of the American Dental Association is to disseminate to its members without delay the advancing state of knowledge pertinent to the profession and the public. This manifests itself in two ways: the year-round activities of Association agencies geared to assist dental societies in carrying on programs in their respective states and local communities; and the climax of the Association year, the annual session, usually held in the fall, when a four-day scientific session is held for all members.

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