Preface

Now Is the Time for Special Care Dentistry

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Editor

I am excited to share this emerging issue on “Special Care Dentistry” and make an honorable note of thanks and admiration to my predecessor and late editor, Dr Burton S. Wasserman, who paved the way with two issues in 2009 and 2016, on this important area of the oral health profession. It is with much enthusiasm these topics were proposed and vetted with the guidance of Mr John Vassallo, the editor of Dental Clinics of North America, and Ms Ann Gielou Posedio, the developmental editor, during what the profession will note to be one of the most catalyzing and evolving periods of our profession. The topics were selected to represent the breadth of patient management areas of expertise, to include the diversity of patient populations as well as the essentials of preventive and restorative care, and even innovative care delivery models in virtual health that were sparked and encouraged by the COVID-19 global pandemic. I thank the contributing authors for their dedication to the topics despite the obvious challenges.

This is a pinnacle time in special care dentistry. Educators in the dental profession collectively recognize the importance of training future oral health care providers to serve these vulnerable populations. The Special Care Dentistry Association (SCDA) has taken on two such initiatives to request for approval by the Commission on Dental Accreditation for advanced training programs in geriatric dental medicine (initiated in 2019) and special needs dentistry (initiated in 2021), which were sparked by resolutions passed by the American Dental Association House of Delegates and with leadership by the Council on Dental Education and Licensure. Advocates in the profession appreciate how critical it will be to have an equipped workforce for the care of persons with special health care needs (SHCNs) across the lifespan. This will include training the present workforce through various avenues to manage patients with increasing health and risk complexity across a variety of practice settings. Learners are also excited to gain the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and practice behaviors to
manage patients with SHCNs, so much so that training programs are now focused to respond to their trainees’ energy and forward-thinking.

Meanwhile, three postgraduate training pathways with close connections to special care dentistry have each received dental specialty recognition in the United States, namely Dental Anesthesiology (adopted March 2019), Oral Medicine (adopted September 2020), and Orofacial Pain (adopted September 2020). Both SCDA and the American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry (AADMD) have partnered on initiatives to better understand and unravel the barriers to care for patients with SHCNs, and AADMD continues the superb advocacy and interprofessional education and collaboration efforts for which the organization is well known. Resources and reimbursement for vulnerable populations are continued topics of importance for the future. Across the profession, the trend is a zoomed-in focus on oral health topics related to persons with SHCNs. It is a fine time to be involved and invigorated in special care dentistry! I am forever grateful for the opportunity to be editor of this special issue.

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