



# Certified Press

Measuring Dental Assisting Excellence™

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## DANB to Introduce Exams on Expanded Functions Topics in 2010



DANB's Expanded Functions Exam Committee met this summer at DANB offices to begin work on exam construction. Pictured left to right: Steven Klingler, DDS; Pixie Needham, RDH; Pam Baldwin, CDA, RDA, BE; Ernest DeWald, DDS, MAGD, FACD, FICD; Cynthia Phillips, CDA; Betty Haberkamp, DDS, MAGD; Tonja Bowcut, CDA; Donna Kotyk, CDA, RDH (Board liaison)

DANB is in the process of developing five exams on expanded functions, with the hopes to begin administering the exams in 2010. The five new DANB expanded functions exams will test the knowledge required to competently perform these functions: coronal polishing, applying topical fluoride, applying sealants, applying topical anesthetic, and scaling for plaque-induced gingivitis.

"Access to quality care is a prominent issue in dentistry. DANB will offer these new exams to assist state dental boards in meeting their public protection missions. DANB will emphasize that the dental assistants who pass these new expanded functions exams will only be allowed to perform these functions if they are defined as delegable to dental assistants within a state's dental practice act or administrative rules," says Cindy Durley, DANB's Executive Director.

### DANB's Recertification Requirements Revised for 2010

DANB Certified Assistants will see a new look for the 2010 DANB Recertification Requirements. This summer, DANB conducted an online survey requesting feedback and suggestions from Certificants regarding DANB's Recertification Requirements. One change survey respondents requested was improvement in the design and layout of DANB's Recertification Requirements. Taking this suggestion into account, the 2010 DANB Recertification Requirements will be redesigned to be easier to read and navigate.

A redesigned layout won't be the only change. DANB has decided to streamline its Continuing Dental Education (CDE) categories to help Certificants more easily identify the category under which their CDE falls.

For clarity purposes, DANB will reduce the number of CDE categories by combining Home Study Courses (category 4) with Clinical Courses (category 2) and Non-Clinical Courses (category 3). DANB will also update Scholarly Activity (category 10) and no longer award CDE for completing job analysis surveys. Instead, DANB will offer a gift card incentive for participation in this vital activity that helps to ensure the validity of DANB exams.

The 2010 DANB Recertification Requirements will also switch from the term "CDE hours" to "CDE credits." This terminology change will be implemented because not all CDE credits are counted hour-for-hour.

Overall, DANB Certificants report that they enjoy earning CDE and are proud of maintaining DANB Certification. "It makes me proud to do what I do," one DANB Certificant said.

Continuing education is a critical component of recertification, and many DANB Certificants enjoy staying on the leading edge of the dental assisting field. "I appreciated the continuing education that I could get," one DANB Certificant explained in a survey.

The objective of CDE is to improve the knowledge, skills and competency of the individual to provide the highest-quality service to the public and the profession. DANB requires a minimum of 12 CDE hours annually, including current DANB-accepted CPR because that number is in line with states that have mandatory CDE requirements for dental assistants. Additionally, as more states require or recognize DANB's Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) exam for dental assistants to perform specific duties, state regulatory boards expect those CDAs to maintain and enhance their knowledge by earning 12 CDE credits per year.

DANB's yearly CDE requirement emphasizes the importance of lifelong professional learning and development. And, lifelong learning is one of the many reasons that holding DANB Certification is the mark of dental assisting excellence. As one DANB Certificant put it so well, earning and maintaining DANB Certification is "proof of my excellence in the dental assisting field."

Thanks to all who participated in this survey to help DANB improve its processes.

#### Did You Know?

If you earn more than 12 CDE Credits in a year, the additional credits can be carried over and applied to the following year, to meet your DANB CDE requirements!

### Initiation of Proposed Pilot Study Postponed

In the Summer 2009 *Certified Press*, DANB announced that it would launch a pilot study in 2010 to determine if graduates of dental assisting programs in vocational-technical schools meeting certain criteria would be allowed to apply their one-year of education toward the two years of work experience required for candidates qualifying for the CDA or GC Exam through Pathway II. At the August 2009 meeting, DANB's Board of Directors voted to postpone the start date of the proposed CDA/GC Pilot Pathway study by one year, from January 1, 2010 to January 1, 2011.

Planning to postpone the start of the proposed pilot study allows DANB more time to gather feedback from communities of interest, and to provide this feedback for consideration by the ADA Council on Dental Education and Licensure (CDEL), under CDEL's *Criteria for Recognition of a Certifying Board for Dental Assistants*. Postponing the proposed pilot study also allows more time for qualified dental assisting programs to apply. Without a minimum number of prospective dental assistant CDA/GC exam candidates to participate in the proposed study, passing results data cannot be analyzed. Currently, of approximately 200 dental assisting programs that meet the proposed pilot study criteria and are not CODA-accredited, only 19 programs have applied to participate, and of these 19, only 15 meet DANB's participation criteria. If an insufficient number of non-CODA-accredited dental assisting programs that meet DANB criteria apply to participate, DANB will no longer consider undertaking the proposed CDA/GC exam pilot pathway study.

If the study is initiated, it will begin January 1, 2011 and conclude with applications received on or postmarked by December 31, 2013. *(Cont'd on p. 3)*

## DANB Certified Assistants Continue Professional Involvement Through Emeritus Status

As Barbara Molitor, CDA-Emeritus, neared retirement, she knew she wanted to keep the professional status and credibility that she had gained during 34 years as a DANB Certified Dental Assistant. "I decided to apply for DANB Emeritus status because I felt I had really fulfilled what I set out to do with my career," said Molitor. "It was the next step to take since I was retiring."

Maintaining a professional designation after retirement from dental assisting can be accomplished through earning Emeritus status. Like many academic professionals, healthcare workers and other professionals, DANB Certified Assistants can hold Emeritus status after retirement or medical disability.

All DANB Certified Assistants, including CDA, COA, COMSA and CDPMA, may apply for Emeritus status if they meet the requirements:

- Maintain continuous current certification for four of the five years immediately preceding application; and
- Become totally and permanently disabled; or
- Retired from dentistry/dental assisting at the age of 60 years or older; or
- Retire from the field of dentistry/dental assisting with 35 years of continuous DANB Certification

"I became certified years ago, and maintained my certification until I finally retired as a dental assistant and as a dental assisting educator in the community college system," said Jimmie Melton, CDA-Emeritus. "I treasured my certification and always stressed the importance of DANB Certification to my students."

DANB Certified Assistants who are granted Emeritus Certification status receive an Emeritus wallet card, a new DANB certificate with "Emeritus Status" printed on it, and an Emeritus status lapel pin. "What a lovely surprise when I opened the package from DANB and discovered the Emeritus Certification pin! It is beautiful and I shall treasure it always," said Melton.

When Certificants like Molitor and Melton are granted Emeritus status, they must use the Emeritus designation; for example, Barbara Molitor, CDA-Emeritus or Jimmie Melton, CDA-Emeritus. This is required because DANB's certifications are used as the basis for registration or licensure in many states, and for delegation of expanded duties. The regulatory agencies need to know if those to whom duties are legally delegated in a state meet current DANB requirements. Those who are granted Emeritus status are not currently DANB Certified, and also no longer need to recertify on an annual basis. However, they will continue to receive all other DANB correspondence and publications, including the *Certified Press*.

To qualify for DANB Emeritus status due to disability, the applicant should include, along with the complet-

ed application, a letter from the physician on his or her office letterhead, stating that the Certificant is physically and permanently unable to perform any dental assisting duties required. To qualify for DANB Emeritus status due to retirement, the applicant must submit a letter stating the intention and date of retirement, and either a letter from the employer on the employer's letterhead, or proof of the receipt social security benefits.

DANB Emeritus Certification status is a great way to remain a part of the dental assisting professional community, and to be recognized for the many accomplishments made when actively employed as a dental assistant. "I plan to continue to attend seminars, learn about dentistry, and keep in touch with people I know," said Molitor. "It's not the end of a career, but a sign of years of service and achievement of a standing. It doesn't mean the end, and it could be the beginning of many things."

If you meet Emeritus Certification status requirements and are interested in applying, simply download an application at [www.danb.org/PDFs/Emeritus.pdf](http://www.danb.org/PDFs/Emeritus.pdf). Return the completed application, along with the required documentation to DANB. Call 1-800-FOR-DANB with any questions regarding DANB Emeritus Certification status.

# Word from the Chair



**Howard C. Bell, DDS**  
Chair, DANB Board of Directors

With the end of summer behind us and the changes that autumn brings quickly approaching, I am reminded of the transformations that many dental assistants encounter during the span of a career. Whether you have recently become DANB Certified, are looking to advance your career, or are nearing retirement, this issue of *Certified Press* offers a variety of information that I hope you will find beneficial at any stage of your professional life.

Recently, the DANB Annual Board of Directors meeting took place, where we reviewed and discussed the significant work DANB has accomplished during the past six months. If you are an instructor, or know a candidate interested in taking a DANB exam, look for DANB Exam News on page 2 for exam policy and administrative updates, including the development of five national exams on expanded functions, discussed on page 1.

For the more than 32,000 DANB Certified Assistants who renew their certification annually, DANB will redesign DANB's Recertification Requirements to be easier to read and navigate. See page 1 for information on what you can expect when you renew in 2010.

For DANB Certified Assistants nearing retirement, maintaining your professional status can be accomplished through obtaining Emeritus status. Also on page 1, learn about former DANB Certificants who have achieved Emeritus status and why they choose to remain a part of the DANB community.

At the Annual Board of Directors meeting, DANB welcomed three new Board directors, thanked the outgoing Board directors for their years of service, and elected new officers, who will begin serving their terms immediately. As the newly elected Chair of the DANB Board, I look forward to supporting DANB's mission to promote the public good by providing credentialing services to the dental community.

I encourage all DANB Certified Assistants to continue to reach for excellence in any stage of the career path, and to support other dental assistants' professional growth by encouraging them to hold the DANB Certification mark.

Until the holiday season ...

*Howard C. Bell, DDS*

## Congratulations to Emeritus Certificants

May 1, 2009 - July 31, 2009

Name/State	Certification Year
Patricia Andrews, CDA-Emeritus, FL	1976
Jean Apgar, CDA, CDPMA-Emeritus, FL	1969
Teresa Bridges, CDA-Emeritus, TN	1987
Susen Darst, CDA-Emeritus, NC	1974
Linda Hadden, CDA-Emeritus, MI	1990
Kathy Kramer, CDA-Emeritus, ND	1994
Judith Kurz, CDA-Emeritus, TX	1991
Lori Pasch, CDA-Emeritus, CA	1981
Sharon St. Hilaire, CDA-Emeritus, MN	1983
Jani Wolstenholme, CDA, COMSA-Emeritus	1984

### Did You Know?

Along with the three traditional mailed renewal notices, DANB now sends a recertification reminder e-mail to DANB Certificants two weeks prior to the expiration date. Check out pages 4-5 for the complete DANB Recertification Requirements and the recertification timeline.

## DANB Exam News

### Recertification is Easier Than Ever With Online Renewal!

DANB now offers online renewal to Certified Assistants! If you have received your Renewal Notice, you can make your renewal payment online, conveniently and easily. Have your Renewal Notice in front of you and visit <http://www.danb.org/renewonline> to get started. You are eligible to renew online if you have received your Renewal Notice and are within the 90-day window of your expiration date. If you have lost your Renewal Notice, please call 1-800-FOR-DANB.

There are more than 32,000 DANB Certified Assistants. Earning and maintaining DANB Certification offers many benefits, including personal pride, a professional advantage, industry recognition, greater earning power, career mobility, and more!

### DANB Reaches Five-Year Mark, Holding Exam and Renewal Fees Steady

DANB is pleased to announce that there will be no renewal or exam fee increases in 2010. DANB is proud of its success rate at keeping these fees the same for a fifth year in a row. The last time DANB increased exam fees was in 2006, and the last time renewal fees were raised was in 2007.

However, in order to keep up with inflation, DANB's Board of Directors has approved moderate exam fee increases in 2011 and a small renewal fee increase in 2012. Beginning January 1, 2011, CDA and COA exam fees will increase to \$375, while the GC, RHS, ICE and OA component exams will each increase by \$25. DANB will continue to accept applications from the 2010 Candidate Guide with the current exam fees through March 31, 2011.

DANB's Board of Directors also approved a \$5 increase in the renewal fee, raising it from \$55 to \$60, effective with Certificants whose expiration date is January 1, 2012 or thereafter.

"As part of our mission, DANB is committed to a properly governed, financially secure, and administratively sound organization," states Cindy Durley, DANB's Executive Director. "DANB takes its fiduciary responsibilities to its exam candidates and Certificants seriously, working hard to hold fees steady for five years, even with mounting economic pressures.

"We are proud to deliver quality exams and excellent related services to our stakeholders," she continues, "and will continue to look for ways to increase services while holding down costs."

### DANB to Offer New Combination of Component Exams in 2010

"We have received comments from candidates asking if they can take DANB's RHS and ICE in a combined exam administration at a reduced rate," DANB Director of Testing and Measurement Johnna Gueorguieva says. Therefore, beginning April 1, 2010, DANB will offer the RHS and ICE exams as a packaged testing event for an exam fee of \$220 - \$80 less than taking the exams separately. As in the past, candidates will earn Certificates of Competency in Radiation Health and Safety and/or Infection Control, depending on which of these component exams they pass when they take them in combination during one administration.

"DANB staff is always looking for ways to make its exam and certification process more accessible for candidates," DANB Executive Director Cindy Durley explains. "DANB hopes that by offering the RHS and ICE test package, more candidates will earn Certificates of Competency and then work toward eligibility to take the General Chairside component exam to earn DANB CDA Certification." To become a CDA, all three component exams (GC, RHS and ICE) must be passed within a five-year period.

### Written Exams to be Discontinued to Enhance Exam Security

Because security is of the utmost importance to DANB, national exams will no longer be administered in the written (paper and pencil) format, effective January 1, 2009. "Moving to completely computerized exam administration is a smart step for DANB and its stakeholders," explains DANB Director of Testing and Measurement Johnna Gueorguieva. "I am pleased the DANB Board of Directors has made this decision to further enhance the already-high security measures DANB has in place surrounding its exams."

### New Policies for DANB Candidates

The DANB Board approved removing the restriction of "continuous" from the current work experience policy. Effective August 24, 2009, DANB will now accommodate dental assistants applying to take the Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) or Certified Orthodontic Assistant (COA) certification exams or the General Chairside (GC) or Orthodontic Assisting (OA) component exams through eligibility Pathway II, who have small gaps in their dental assisting work experience.

This accommodation will be made as long as CDA, COA, GC, and OA exam candidates applying through Pathway II have accrued 3,500 hours of work experience between a minimum of at least two years [24 months] (if employed full time) and at least four years [48 months] (if employed part time).

Because the work experience no longer needs to be continuous, Candidates who have extenuating circumstances, such as moving or medical reasons, but otherwise meet the work experience requirements, now have increased access to DANB exams.

DANB staff is reviewing incomplete CDA, COA, GC and OA applications back through August 1, 2008 to determine if any Pathway II candidates who applied before this policy change will now meet DANB exam eligibility requirements. Those candidates who meet all current eligibility requirements will be offered the opportunity to reapply, less the \$50 nonrefundable application fee.

Also effective August 24, 2009, candidates who have not scheduled an exam appointment, or have canceled a scheduled exam appointment, have the option to reschedule a computerized exam window for up to 60 days after the end of their 60-day exam eligibility windows for a \$35 rescheduling fee. Prior to August 24, 2009, candidates had to contact DANB at least 2 business days before their 60-day exam eligibility window expired to reschedule an exam eligibility window.

Starting January 1, 2010, candidates can only reschedule a DANB exam up to three times before being required to reapply with the full fees and new application.

### Congratulations to DANB New Certificants!

[www.danb.org/PDFs/NewCerts.pdf](http://www.danb.org/PDFs/NewCerts.pdf)

### Determining If Another Eligibility Pathway to the GC Component of the CDA Exam Should Be Added

Currently there are two main eligibility pathways to qualify to take DANB's full Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) exam or the General Chairside (GC) component exam. Graduates of dental assisting or dental hygiene programs accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) apply to test through Pathway I, while on-the-job-trained dental assistants with proof of high school graduation or equivalent apply to test through Pathway II. All CDA and GC exam candidates must hold a current DANB-accepted cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certificate.

In August 2008, DANB's Board of Directors proposed a pilot study of a new eligibility pathway for those wishing to take the full CDA exam or the GC component of the CDA. The pilot study will be conducted to determine if individuals who graduate from dental assisting programs that are not CODA-accredited but meet the criteria shown below

#### Alternate Eligibility Pathways to the CDA Exam: When, Why and How

##### 1948: One CDA exam component, and one CDA exam eligibility pathway

In 1948, DANB's predecessor, the Certifying Board of the American Dental Assistants Association (ADAA), administered the first CDA exam. After all these years, we do not know whether the first CDA exam addressed dental radiation health and safety. Certainly, infection control and occupational safety concerns were very different than they are now. We do know that, unlike today, the CDA had no separate component exams—a candidate took the full CDA exam and either passed it or failed it.

In 1948, there was only one eligibility pathway to the CDA exam: graduation from a full-year (9 to 12-month) dental assisting program accredited by the ADAA. The Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA), which currently accredits dental assisting programs, was only accrediting dental and dental hygiene educational programs in 1948. At that time, the ADAA had developed standards for dental assisting education and was the accrediting body for dental assisting programs. The ADAA transferred the standards, and the accreditation authority, to the American Dental Association (ADA) in 1960. Some years later, the ADA established the Commission on Dental Accreditation as a separate entity with its own governing structure, to accredit educational programs for all of the dental professions. Today, CODA is the only accrediting body recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDoE) as qualified to accredit dental assisting programs, (though there are at least 10 other USDoE-recognized entities qualified to accredit institutions within which dental assisting programs are housed).

##### 1977: Under the Carter Administration, the federal government acts out of concern for "fly-by-night" credentialing agencies

During the presidency of Jimmy Carter, the U.S. government took notice of the proliferation of certifications for healthcare professionals and the lack of any reliable means of assessing the quality or legitimacy of these certification programs. In many professions, certification exams were being relied on to make high stakes decisions, such as using certifications as the basis for licensure, or for hospital privileges. However, there was no independent mechanism for evaluating certifications and credentials issued to health care professionals. How could members of the public, employers, hospitals, insurers, etc. determine if healthcare workers were at least minimally competent to provide care?

Under a federally funded mandate from the Carter administration, in 1977, the National Commission for Health Certifying Agencies (NCHCA) was formed to develop accreditation standards for professional certifications. These accreditation standards established best practices for certification programs and the organizations that sponsored them. Separation of professional certification from both membership organizations and educational accreditation agencies was one of these best practice standards. Therefore, to meet this standard for independent governance (developed to eliminate or at least reduce the opportunities for conflicts of interest in the development and awarding of certification), in 1980, the Certifying Board of the ADAA was separately incorporated as the Dental Assisting National Board, Inc. (DANB).

(Note: In the later 1980's, the NCHCA was reformed as two organizations: the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA), which is the membership association for certification organizations, and the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), the accrediting body for certification programs.)

##### 1981: Congress passes the Consumer Patient Radiation Health and Safety Act of 1981

The Consumer Patient Radiation Health and Safety Act of 1981 is a federal law addressing education and credentialing requirements for individuals operating radiological equipment in healthcare settings. The ADAA, ADA, and DANB worked together to ensure the inclusion of dental healthcare workers in the Act before it passed in 1981. Because of this federal law, by the mid-1980's, some state dental boards were beginning to recognize the CDA exam as meeting requirements for dental assistants to expose dental radiographs. However, because formal education was not (and is still not) mandatory for dental assistants, the majority of dental assistants were on-the-job trained (OJT). DANB's CDA exam was still open only to CODA-accredited dental assisting program graduates at this time. To restrict access to a required exam to only those who were formally educated in particular schools, when such education was not mandatory, could be considered restraint of trade. That is, it might be argued that requiring that people graduate from CODA-accredited dental assisting programs to take the CDA exam and then requiring the CDA exam to expose dental radiographs prevents people who might otherwise be qualified to safely perform the job from becoming employed. DANB took steps to ensure that it would be protected from claims that it was unfairly restraining trade.

##### 1985: DANB's Radiation Health and Safety (RHS) exam is developed as a separate component of the CDA

##### 1984-1986: Three-year study of OJTs leads to an alternate pathway to the CDA/GC exam

In 1983, DANB began work to develop a job analysis specific to safely taking dental radiographs, and in 1985, the Radiation Health and Safety (RHS) exam became a separate component of the CDA exam. Because some states had no educational requirements to expose dental radiographs, and because some states allowed individuals as young as 16 years of age to expose dental radiographs, DANB determined the RHS exam would be a stand-alone exam, without any national eligibility requirements; any such requirements would be the purview of each state dental board.

However, because some states required dental assistants to be CDAs before being legally allowed to expose dental radiographs, and also to perform other expanded duties, the same "restraint of trade" concerns prompted DANB, in 1984, to initiate a three-year study to determine how many years of dental assisting work experience would provide individuals with sufficient basic knowledge to pass the GC component of the CDA exam at a level that was statistically equivalent to the GC exam pass rate of the CODA-accredited dental assisting program graduates.

The pass rate of the CODA-accredited dental assisting program graduates was established as the benchmark or gold standard against which the performance of the OJT candidates would be evaluated. The results of this three-year study indicated that, in order to pass the GC component of the CDA exam at a rate that was statistically equivalent to the pass rate of CODA-accredited dental assisting program graduates, OJT dental assistants would need to work at least 3,500 hours full time (2 years) as dental assistants. A few years after that, in recognition of the fact that many dental assistants work part time, this study was replicated to see if those who worked part time for 3,500 hours over 2 to 4 years (24 to 48 months) would pass the GC component of the CDA exam at the same rate. They did.

can use this educational experience to count toward one of the two years of work experience currently required under CDA/GC exam eligibility Pathway II. For graduates of non-CODA-accredited dental assisting programs to be considered eligible to participate in this proposed three-year DANB pilot study, programs must meet all of these criteria:

- Be housed within an institution accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDoE), and
- Be at least one academic year in length (25 semester or trimester hours, or 36 quarter hours, or 900 clock hours, with a minimum of 300 clinical hours), and
- Present a comprehensive dental assisting curriculum that teaches the content areas addressing all core duties performed by dental assistants, such as those addressed in the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) *Standards for the Accreditation of Dental Assisting Programs*.

Dental assisting students who graduate from programs that meet the above criteria would be required to meet these eligibility prerequisites to be considered qualified by DANB to participate in the proposed pilot study:

- Graduate from high school or equivalent, and
- Graduate or complete a DANB-accepted vocational-technical dental assisting program that meets the above criteria, and
- Complete a minimum of 1 year of continuous full time work experience (at least 1,750 hours) as a dental assistant, and
- Hold DANB-accepted CPR certification.

DANB's announcements about the proposed pilot study to evaluate a potential new eligibility pathway to the Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) exam (and the General Chairside Assisting (GC) component of the CDA exam) have generated significant interest in the history and principles underlying DANB's existing eligibility pathways. The overview of the evolution of DANB's eligibility pathways (left sidebar) may help answer a number of questions.

#### Benchmarking Against CODA-Accredited Dental Assisting Programs

Every year, DANB continues to monitor the pass rate performance of OJTs against the pass rate benchmark established by the CODA-accredited dental assisting program graduates. If DANB observes a statistically significant difference in pass rates of candidates applying to take the GC component – that is, if the OJT candidates begin to perform at a much lower level than the CODA-accredited program graduates – then DANB will investigate options for conducting another study to determine what OJT exam eligibility requirements should be modified to bring OJT pass rates back into alignment with the pass rates of CODA-accredited dental assisting program graduates.

DANB supports CODA-accredited dental assisting programs as the gold standard for dental assisting education. Since the inception of the CDA exam, the principles on which the CODA-accreditation standards are founded have formed the basis of CDA exam eligibility. However, there are approximately just as many full-year dental assisting programs that are not CODA-accredited, but that are located in educational institutions that are accredited by USDoE-recognized agencies. Many of these programs are advertised as "accredited." In addition, there is an increasing number of dental assisting training programs, ranging in length from a few weekends to a few months, that are not accredited by any USDoE-recognized agency, but are recognized by state departments of education and are advertised as "state-accredited."

The majority of state dental boards that establish educational requirements for dental assistants who wish to perform core or expanded dental assisting duties

(cont'd on p. 4)

# Pilot Study Update (cont'd)

recognize CODA-accredited dental assisting programs as the benchmark for dental assisting education. However, most state dental boards do not have a way of determining whether or not those dental assisting educational programs or courses that are *not* CODA-accredited provide the basis for at least minimally competent performance in dental assisting duties, and so they often accept some or all such programs as meeting state requirements. In other cases, a state dental board may choose to develop a course approval process and, in doing so, may find itself performing the role of an accreditation agency without the resources needed to be effective.

Dental assistants who complete programs that are not accredited by CODA often find themselves, after significant expenditure, no closer to meeting state education requirements or DANB CDA/GC exam eligibility requirements, especially if they have no dental assisting work experience.

Some states have very few CODA-accredited dental assisting programs. It is not feasible for some dental assistants to attend these programs that may be very far away from where they live. This is especially true because, at least at this time, there are very few CODA-accredited dental assisting programs that provide online access to their non-clinical educational requirements. And, those who do live close enough to a CODA-accredited dental assisting program may not be able to enroll due to either limited space in the pro-

**DANB supports CODA-accredited dental assisting programs as the gold standard for dental assisting education.**

gram, or a need to work during the day, when classes are traditionally in session.

These factors have led a number of state dental boards to request DANB's assistance in meeting their public protection mission and in determining whether those dental assistants who attend nine- to 12-month dental assisting programs that are not CODA-accredited meet minimum standards for required dental assisting knowledge. These state dental boards would prefer to use the CDA exam to test these individuals against the benchmark set by CODA-accredited programs to ensure safe delegation of duties.

The alternative for regulators seeking to address dental assisting workforce capacity issues in their respective states is to look for an alternate means of competency assessment, which could lead to recognition of a variety of non-equivalent exams and educational programs or courses of study. DANB believes it is in the best interest of the public and the dental assisting profession to maximize use of the CDA exam, which is closely tied and benchmarked against CODA-accredited education, as the standard measure of dental assisting competency among state dental boards.

### **Why conduct pilot studies for eligibility to take the GC component of the CDA exam?**

State dental boards located in states with few CODA-accredited dental assisting programs still want to ensure public safety by only recognizing dental assisting education that provides assistants with at least a minimum level of knowledge-based competency. But

they also frequently believe that it is safe to delegate some duties to OJT dental assistants who have worked as dental assistants for fewer than 3,500 hours and so hesitate to require DANB's CDA exam as the sole mechanism for allowing delegation of these duties.

Can dental assistants who attend a year-long dental assisting program that is not CODA-accredited apply that year of study toward meeting one of the two years of full-time work experience required under CDA/GC exam eligibility pathway II (the OJT pathway)? In order to determine if this one year of formal education is equivalent to one of the two years of work experience required by DANB's CDA/GC exam eligibility pathway II, DANB must conduct a formal pilot study.

The American Dental Association (ADA) recognizes DANB as the national certification board for dental assistants. In order to maintain ADA recognition, DANB must apply to the ADA's Council on Dental Education and Licensure (CDEL) each time DANB is considering conducting a study that might result in modification to its CDA exam eligibility requirements. This application must include feedback from DANB's communities of interest, which include the ADA, American Dental Education Association, American Association of Dental Examiners, and individual state dental boards. DANB is currently gathering feedback, and will report to CDEL at CDEL's November 2009 and May 2010 meetings.

Currently, the pilot study for an alternate CDA/GC exam eligibility pathway is in the proposal stage. DANB will provide additional information on the details of its proposed pilot study in the Winter 2010 *Certified Press*.

## Renewing DANB Certification

DANB certification is valid for one year, and must therefore be renewed annually. In order to renew their certification, DANB Certificants are required to complete 12 hours of Continuing Dental Education, hold a current DANB-accepted CPR certification and submit a renewal fee to DANB. A renewal notice will be mailed approximately six weeks prior to their certification expiration date, which is printed on each DANB Certificate. Certificants are asked to sign a statement attesting that CDE and CPR requirements have been met, and to return the statement with the appropriate renewal fee to DANB. Renewal fees are not refundable.

# of Credentials	CDE Hours (including CPR)	Renewal Fee*
One (1)	12 Hours	\$55
Two (2)	18 Hours	\$80
Three (3)	24 Hours	\$100
Four (4)	30 Hours	\$125

\*A \$10 late fee is assessed after the Certificate expiration date, but within the three-month grace period.

If DANB does not receive a response to renewal statement(s) within three (3) months of the expiration date, the Certificant is no longer certified and cannot

use the CDA, COA, COMSA, or CDPMA acronym. To protect against misuse of DANB credentials, DANB sends reports of lapsed DANB Certificants to state regulatory agencies on a regular basis.

This sample timeline illustrates the DANB Certification renewal process. In this example, the individual's CDA certification expires Jan. 15, 2009.

December 1, 2008	A renewal notice is sent to Certificant.
January 15, 2009	Signed statement and fee are due by this date or DANB Certification expires.
January 16, 2009	Grace period begins. A \$10 late fee is assessed. If the fee is not received, a second notice is sent.
February 28, 2009	Grace period continues. If the fee is not received, the final notice is sent.
March 31, 2009	If the fee is not received, a reminder e-mail is sent to the Certificant.
April 16, 2009	The grace period ends. If the fees and signed statement are not received, the individual is no longer DANB Certified. Call 1-800-FOR-DANB for reinstatement options.

## DANB Recertification Policy

- I. All continuing dental education (CDE) must directly relate to the practice of dentistry or dental assisting in order to maintain or improve dental assisting knowledge or skill. CDE does not need to be pre-approved by DANB in order to be accepted as meeting DANB Recertification Requirements. Call DANB prior to participation in education if you have questions about acceptance.
- II. Programs must be at least 45 minutes in length in order to qualify for one CDE credit. Credit for a CDE course will be calculated in 15-minute increments (i.e., 1 1/2 hours = 1.5 CDE credits; 2 3/4 hours = 2.75 CDE credits).
- III. Education dated prior to the initial certification date cannot be used to meet DANB CDE requirements. Certificants must earn the appropriate number of CDE hours during the first year of certification to maintain certification.

- IV. Education has a two-year lifespan. Certificants who carry over credits into the next renewal year must retain proof of 24 hours of CDE over a two-year period.
- V. Multiple Certifications: It is possible to be certified in each of four areas: CDA, COA, COMSA, and CDPMA. Renewal requirements are set at an approximately 50% increase over basic requirements for each additional credential maintained.
- VI. Renewal Timing and Expiration: A three-month grace period is granted if the required CDE hours are not accumulated and appropriate fee is not received by the expiration date. An individual is considered certified during this three-month grace period; however, a late fee of \$10 will be assessed. If DANB does not receive a response to renewal statement(s) within three months of your expiration date, you are no longer certified and cannot use the CDA, COA, COMSA, or CDPMA acronym. Misuse of any DANB credential is grounds

for discipline under DANB's discipline policies and procedures (contact DANB for a copy). For reinstatement of a credential, contact DANB by phone at 1-800-FOR-DANB, ext. 445 or by e-mail at [vspears@danb.org](mailto:vspears@danb.org).

- Value="7">VII. Emeritus Status: DANB Certified Assistants may apply for Emeritus status if they have maintained continuous current Certification for four of the five years immediately preceding application and have: become totally and permanently disabled, or retired from the field of dentistry/dental assisting at age 60 years or older, or retired from the field of dentistry/dental assisting with 35 years of continuous (without any breaks) DANB Certification. Please visit DANB's Web site (at [www.danb.org/recert/recertrecognition.asp](http://www.danb.org/recert/recertrecognition.asp)) to view the complete DANB Policy on "Emeritus Status" or contact DANB at 1-800-FOR-DANB, extension 445. Once Emeritus status is earned, Certificants must use this designation; i.e., Sue Smith, CDA-Emeritus.

## Release of Information

DANB verifies your certification status by mail or phone to anyone upon request, since the fact that you have or have not been certified and the effective date(s) of your certification(s) are a matter of public record and may be disclosed. In addition, unless you choose not to allow it, from time to time, DANB will provide the names and addresses of certificants to dentists interested in hiring a DANB Certificant (CDA, COA, CDPMA, COMSA) or someone who has

passed the Radiation Health and Safety or Infection Control examination from their area, and to providers of continuing education opportunities. DANB may also post current certificant status (certificant name, certification(s) earned, state in which certificant resides, and date of certification) on DANB's Web site. If you do NOT wish to receive non-DANB mailings at your home address (i.e., current job opportunities, continuing education offerings, etc.), or you do NOT

agree to allow DANB to publish your certification status (your name, certification(s) earned, state in which you reside, and date of your certification) on DANB's Web site, you must send a written request to have this information omitted from release or publication to: DANB, Attn: Director of Marketing and Communications, 444 N. Michigan Ave., Ste. 900, Chicago, IL, 60611.

## Requirements/Audit Procedures

The 12 CDE hour annual minimum is in line with states that have mandatory CDE requirements for dental assistants. The yearly CDE requirement emphasizes the importance of lifelong professional learning and ensures the continued competence of DANB Certified Assistants. So that DANB Certification continues to be known in the dental community as a *Mark of Dental Assisting Excellence™*, some DANB Certificants are randomly selected for verification (audit) of their CDE hours and CPR. Those selected for audit will be considered certified during the time that they are providing proof of their continuing education. Specific instructions will be sent to those audited. Upon successful completion of the audit, certification will be reinstated for the full year. Proof of continuing education should be retained for two years, in case of subsequent audit.

**DO NOT SEND DOCUMENTATION UNLESS REQUESTED. MATERIALS WILL NOT BE RETURNED OR RETAINED BY DANB.**

To renew DANB Certification, the Certificant must earn and retain proof of 12 hours of acceptable CDE by the expiration date on the DANB certificate.

## Categories for CDE Hours

Recertification can be earned through accumulating the required number of CDE hours and paying the appropriate renewal fee. It is the responsibility of the certificant to obtain and retain documentation that verifies participation in all CDE activities that will be used for renewal credit. All documentation must indicate name, Certification number, name of sponsor, date of course, number of CDE hours, subject matter, program title, and program presenter.

### 1. Mandatory CPR Certification CDE Hours: Maximum 4 hours

**Accepted Documentation:** Copy of front and back of a current CPR card.

The card must be dated and signed or imprinted with the instructor's name and have the Certificant's name or signature on the card.

NOTE: Two-(2) year CPR card holders can only apply the hours to recertification in the year CPR is earned. In the second year, CPR hours will not count and the Certificant must earn the full number of hours from other categories.

Current CPR certification is required for annual renewal of DANB certification. Effective 2/16/09, DANB accepts CPR certifications from the providers below (CPR must be part of the course), if the Certificant was given a clinical (hands-on) examination. CPR certification from other providers or courses will not be accepted. Call DANB if you are not sure if your provider is accepted.

- American Environmental Health and Safety
- American Heart Association
- American Red Cross
- American Safety and Health Institute
- Canadian Red Cross
- Emergency Care and Safety Institute
- Emergency First Response
- Emergency Medical Training Associates
- Medic First Aid
- Military Training Network
- National Safety Council (Green Cross)
- ProCPR (added Feb. 2009) - Not all courses include the hands-on exam.
- Saudi Heart Association

### 2. Clinical Courses, Seminars, Table Clinics & Exhibits CDE Hours: Hour for Hour (no maximum)

**Exhibit Hours: Maximum 2 hours (1 hour per meeting)**

**Accepted Documentation:** Certificate of completion, DANB approval code, letter of attendance/completion, meeting badge (exhibits), meeting/ badge/program page (table clinics or free on-site lecture), CDE printout from meeting, or similar documentation

Clinical courses are on-site lectures, courses, seminars, and/or table clinics that are directly related to the clinical practice of dentistry or dental assisting, such as skills, knowledge, and duties that would be directly related to chairside: dental materials, four-handed dentistry, infection control, radiology, expanded functions, nonhuman dentistry (i.e., canine and feline dentistry) and others. See Category 3 for non-clinical practice management information.

For each hour that you attend and/or participate in one of these sessions you will receive one (1) CDE credit. Additionally, a maximum of one (1) hour may be earned for reviewing exhibits at dental and/or dental assisting meetings sponsored by recognized dental groups. This can be done a maximum of twice each year at two (2) different meetings. All CDE credits can be clinical in nature.

### 3. Non-Clinical Courses, Seminars & Table Clinics

*Formerly called Electives (including Practice Management)*

**CDE Hours: Maximum 3 hours for CDAs, COAs, & COMSAs  
Maximum 6 hours for CDPMAs**

**Accepted Documentation:** Certificate of completion, DANB approval code, letter of attendance/completion, meeting badge, program page (table clinics or free on-site lecture), CDE printout from meeting, or other like documentation

CDAs, COAs, and COMSAs may earn a maximum of three (3) CDE hours annually. CDPMAs can earn a maximum of six (6) CDE hours annually. This category includes attendance at or participation in courses that are directly related to dental practice management/practice communication services: practice management, HIPAA, stress management, patient and staff motivation, computer courses (college class, software training, etc.), insurance, claims/billing, foreign language studies, American Sign Language, and non-scientific related college courses. This category also includes courses and seminars covering dental practice acts and trends in dental assisting. These courses must be directly related to allowable duties for dental assistants.

### 4. Home Study Courses: Text-Audio-Video-Internet

**CDE Hours: Clinical Home Study Courses: Hour for Hour (no maximum)**

**Non-Clinical Home Study Courses: Maximum 3 hours for CDAs, COAs & COMSAs  
Maximum of 6 hours for CDPMAs**

**Accepted Documentation:** Certificate of completion, DANB approval code, letter of completion, or other like documentation

This category includes completion of any Internet-based text, audio or video courses completed at home. Home study courses can be obtained from the American Dental Assistants Association (ADAA), The National Association of Dental Assistants (NADA) and other agencies. All required CDA hours can be earned through home study courses. CDAs, COAs, and COMSAs may take a maximum of three (3) non-clinical CDE hours or a maximum of twelve (12) clinical CDE hours. CDPMAs may take a maximum of six non-clinical course hours or a maximum of 12 clinical CDE hours

### 5. Video Or Audio Tapes From Convention Seminars

**CDE Hours: Maximum 3 hours**

**Accepted Documentation:** Copy of the 250-word essay, including the meeting and course name.

Certificants may earn a maximum of three (3) CDE hours annually by viewing or listening to a taped CDE course presented at a local, state, regional, or national dental meeting and writing a minimum 250-word summary of that course presentation.

### 6. Reading CDE Hours: Maximum 2 hours

**Accepted Documentation:** Written log of articles and copy of each, 50-word article summary or 250-word textbook summary. Educators may submit a copy of the completed publisher's evaluation form for any materials evaluated for adoption.

Certificants may earn a maximum of one (1) CDE hour annually by reading at least six (6) technical/dental articles published within your renewal period or one (1) dental textbook, published within the past five (5) years. A log must be maintained that includes title of book or article, name of journal, author, and date of publication. This written log earns the certificant one (1) CDE hour. Certificants may earn an additional one (1) CDE hour annually for writing at least a 50-word summary of each article or at least a 250-word summary of the textbook, highlighting its relevance to the dental assisting profession.

Dental assisting educators teaching at least half-time may earn a maximum of three (3) CDE credit hours annually by reviewing new reference materials (textbooks, CD ROMs, audiovisuals, etc.) for possible adoption into their curriculum. *Accepted documentation: Copy of the completed publisher's evaluation form for any materials evaluated for adoption.*

### 7. DANB Exams

**CDE Hours: Maximum 12 hours**

**Accepted Documentation:** Copy of Certificate or Official DANB Score Report

Twelve (12) CDE hours are awarded for each DANB-administered examination successfully completed, excluding the first time a certification exam is passed. These examinations include any DANB national examination, DANB Professional Development Examination Program (PDEP), or any DANB state or agency-contracted examination that consists of at least 100 items. Four (4) CDE hours are awarded for each DANB-administered state or agency-contracted examination that is less than 100 items. Successful completion of non-DANB-developed dental-related professionally proctored exams (consisting of at least 100 questions) will be awarded hour for hour credit, for the amount of time designated for the completion of the exam. If no time is specified, one hour will be allowed for every 100 questions.

### 8. Community Participation

**CDE Hours: Maximum 3 hours**

**Accepted Documentation:** Certificate of completion, letter of attendance/participation, or similar documentation

Certificants may earn a maximum of two (2) CDE hours by participating in dental-related community service and an additional one (1) CDE hour for writing at least a 250-word essay on how the volunteer service benefited the certificant's professional growth. Examples include: international/national mission work, voluntary clinic work, or dental health presentations to students or groups. Community participation does not include activities such as serving on a dental assisting program advisory committee or as an officer and/or committee chair for a national, state, or local dental assisting organization. Volunteer time should be at minimum two (2) hours. DANB will publicly recognize Certificants who complete and provide proof of mission work.

### 9. College Courses

**CDE Hours: No Maximum**

**Accepted Documentation:** Grade report, transcript, letter of verification from instructor on school letterhead

CDE hours are awarded for each scientific-oriented college credit/unit successfully completed at the following levels:

- Three (3) College Credits/Units = Twelve (12) CDE hours
- Two (2) College Credits/Units = Six (6) CDE hours
- One (1) College Credit/Unit = Three (3) CDE hours

Courses must directly relate to the practice of dentistry or dental assisting (i.e., dentistry, dental assisting, dental hygiene, anatomy/physiology, all biology, all chemistry, nutrition). To avoid non-acceptance of credits, call DANB to ascertain whether a course is acceptable and at what CDE hour level.

### 10. Scholarly Activity

**CDE Hours: Maximum 3 hours**

**Accepted Documentation:** Course outline/catalog, copy of program brochure listing the Certificant as Instructor, copy of published article (including name and date of publication), letter from DANB, document from college registrar's office indicating currently enrolled status (see below)

Certificants may earn a maximum of three (3) CDE hours annually for each of the following scholarly activities:

- Teach a professional course directly related to dentistry or dental assisting or present a continuing dental education program, either of which are outside of the Certificant's normal employment teaching responsibilities. (Accepted documentation: course outline/catalog, copy of program brochure listing the Certificant as Instructor)
- Author a published article in a recognized dental or dental assisting journal. (Accepted documentation: copy of published article, including name and date of publication)
- Participate in a DANB Exam Committee/validity study/PDEP development (PDEP development participants cannot use PDEP to renew) or receive one (1) CDE hour for every two (2) exam items accepted by DANB. (Accepted documentation: letter from DANB)
- Certificants may earn all twelve (12) CDE hours required annually by DANB if they are currently enrolled in a college program to earn an advanced degree, but this option can be used for no more than five consecutive years. Twelve (12) CDE hours per year may be earned if enrolled at least half-time (earning 3 or more college credits/units) in a BA, BS, MA, or other recognized degree program. (Accepted documentation: Document from college registrar's office indicating currently enrolled status.)

# E-Learning Initiatives:

## Insights and Information for DANB Stakeholders

In the Summer 2009 issue of *Certified Press*, DANB announced its plans to introduce two new online learning opportunities this fall: an online review course and an Assessment-Based Certificate Program (ABCP). Both of these opportunities were met with great excitement by many DANB stakeholders because of the numerous benefits they provide.

The DANB Board of Directors' decision to undertake the e-learning initiative arose out of a series of larger discussions about the role of DANB Certification in enhancing the oral health of the public. Dental assistants play a critical role in the provision of oral healthcare services, and DANB believes that DANB Certification influences and encourages qualified and competent dental assistants to stay in the dental assisting profession, which leads to an increase in patient comfort and office efficiency, leading to a higher quality of dental care nationwide.

DANB's Board of Directors has been identifying ways to increase outreach to dental assistants and their employers and to make the process of becoming Certified as straightforward as possible. DANB believes there are many excellent dental assistants who choose not to attempt a DANB Certification exam because they are not confident they will succeed or they do not know how to prepare.

In addition, DANB has received direct feedback from dentists indicating that a series of review materials and practice tests would aid dentists in more efficiently helping their assistants to prepare for DANB exams. The Board's discussions led to the decision to begin developing online tools, such as practice tests and review materials, that dental assistants will be able to use to prepare to take DANB exams. DANB intends to use these e-learning opportunities as part of a toolkit to encourage dental assistants to become Certified.

In addition to advancing the goal of enhancing access to DANB exams, DANB's decision to offer e-learning opportunities to its stakeholders was influenced by a number of other factors. DANB consistently receives requests from state and national organizations and state regulatory bodies to collaborate in the development of content review and practice test materials, as well as online assessment-based learning materials covering specific topics. Additionally, DANB believes that the e-learning offerings under development will help DANB better serve dentists by making it easier for the whole office to improve skills and comply with state requirements; DANB hopes that providing an easily accessible high-quality online option for exam review will increase awareness among dentists about DANB and DANB Certification, which will lead to increased employer support for Certified assistants.

### E-Learning Aligns With DANB's Mission And Strategic Priorities

DANB's mission is to promote the public good by providing credentialing services to the dental community. DANB accomplishes and measures the success of this mission through:

- The creation of valid dental assisting exams
- Recertification process integrity
- Valuable, visible, and accessible DANB exams
- The provision of testing services to the oral health care community, and
- The provision of information services and resources related to dental assisting credentialing and recertification

The DANB Board determined that e-learning aligns with DANB's goal of providing information services and resources related to dental assisting credentialing and recertification, as well as increases accessibility of DANB exams by providing a review to relieve some test-taking anxieties.

ABCs developed by DANB will align with aspects of DANB's mission related to "creation of valid dental assisting exams;" "valuable, visible, and accessible DANB exams;" and "the provision of testing services to the oral healthcare community." As previously not-

ed, a primary factor in the decision to begin offering e-learning opportunities was the effort to increase the accessibility of DANB exams. Further, DANB's e-learning initiatives align with DANB's four strategic priorities for 2008 to 2010: visibility; accessibility; testing growth and diversity; and collaboration.

### Benefits to the Oral Healthcare Community

DANB believes its e-learning initiatives will benefit dental assistants, dentists, and the public.

The primary focus in initiating e-learning offerings is to encourage the many qualified and competent dental assistants in the workforce who have not attempted the CDA exam to become Certified. DANB wants these dental assistants to stay in the profession and continue to make a valuable contribution to the oral health of the public.

DANB's surveys show that CDAs demonstrate substantially less job turnover and greater employer loyalty. Turnover can be expensive to a practice, and certainly can be disruptive to the dental team and the patients. The relative stability of DANB

CDAs helps create a stronger team orientation in the office. Patients can take comfort in seeing the same personnel from visit to visit, and in the knowledge that the dental team members are all qualified professionals. Additionally, in some states, CDAs can perform expanded duties, which allows the dental office to operate more efficiently, see more patients, and increase access to care.

At various times, employers, dentists, dental hygiene and dental assisting educators have informed DANB that there is great need for interactive educational offerings for at-home review. It is DANB's hope that dental assisting educators, employers and individual dental assistants find these courses to be a useful review tool to supplement classroom education and on-the-job training.

It is DANB's hope that dental assisting educators, employers and individual dental assistants find these courses to be a useful review tool to supplement classroom education and on-the-job training.

DANB has not yet identified all of the possible e-learning topics. However, DANB will develop e-learning materials to help dental assistants review their knowledge of topics covered in DANB's exam blueprints for the RHS, ICE and GC components of the CDA exam. These online programs will be two to four hours long, and are intended as review only, not primary education, for the CDA exam.

DANB's review courses are not intended in any way to mirror or substitute for dental assisting programs accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). DANB is only creating review materials and ABCPs focused on narrowly defined topics, rather than addressing broad knowledge of dental assisting theory and practice taught in formal dental assisting educational programs of at least 900 clock hours.

DANB fully supports CODA's mission to accredit full-length formal dental education programs that meet CODA Standards for the Accreditation of Dental Assisting Programs. DANB online learning courses are not structured in a way that would meet CODA-accreditation standards. Instead, DANB online courses are intended for concept review, not as initial or primary education. In addition, DANB does not intend to require these courses for Certification or to use these courses to ultimately provide alternate eligibility pathways for the CDA exam or any of the CDA component exams. DANB's review courses are intended as a tool for review only, while DANB's ABCPs will focus on dental assisting and dental office management areas not covered by the CDA exam.

### Upholding Best Practices

DANB takes great care to ensure that its activities meet national certification standards and best practices.

The National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), the agency that accredits DANB's certification programs, explains that "as long as the organization/agency-sponsored education is not a required prerequisite to obtain the credential and other methods of preparation are available," certifying organizations may offer education.

(cont'd on next page)

## All About ABCPs

### DANB's Exam-Development Expertise Enhances Public Protection

There is a nationwide trend for state regulatory bodies to accept a variety of education and credentialing products to meet state requirements for many professions. Currently, state dental boards and other regulatory agencies allow dental assistants to meet state regulatory requirements in a variety of ways, which may include professional certifications such as DANB's CDA credential, Certificates of Competency such as DANB's RHS and ICE exams, or assessment-based certificate programs, which are educational courses culminating in a post-test.

DANB believes that all of the nearly 300,000 dental assistants in the United States should be CDAs, and DANB will continue to promote this goal at every opportunity. While DANB uses the CDA/GC exam pass rate of graduates of Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA)-accredited dental assisting programs as the gold standard for competency assessment, not everyone can complete a full-year CODA-accredited dental assisting program. And, while DANB offers an exam eligibility pathway for dental assistants who are on-the-job trained (CDA/GC Pathway II), many state dental boards do not believe dental assistants should wait until they complete at least 3,500 hours of work experience earned over a 2- to 4-year period before being qualified to perform dental assisting duties in their state.

Therefore, these states look to other types of education and credentialing products to meet state requirements, sometimes in place of but often in addition to DANB Certification. Sometimes, states recognize as meeting state dental assisting requirements education that may not meet national standards of instructional design and, if a post-test is provided, assessment that may not meet national standards of testing and competency measurement.

DANB is developing alternative educational products and services because DANB has the expertise on-staff to do so. When state regulators look for alternatives to offer in addition to Certification to meet state dental assisting requirements, DANB wants to be positioned to provide high-quality products in addition to national Certification, so as to enhance public protection and to be able to clearly distinguish Certification from education, including Assessment-Based Certificate Programs (ABCs).

If an ABCP is developed without adherence to nationally accepted educational and measurement standards, then completing such a course may not adequately confer the knowledge and skills sought and the course should not be used for high-stakes purposes, such as licensure or registration. The ability to legally defend these programs can be diminished, should a dental assistant who is licensed or registered in a state cause harm to a patient through action or failure to act.

DANB is committed to creating products that meet the highest national standards and are developed in accordance with nationally accepted educational and measurement principles. By providing state regulators with a full array of high-quality options appropriate for high-stakes uses, DANB is assisting regulators in meeting their public protection missions and enhancing the health and well-being of dental patients.

In addition, by presenting these high-quality options side-by-side, DANB creates opportunities to highlight the distinguishing features of each option and thereby assists state dental boards and other state and federal regulators in making choices that best protect the public.

# Certificant Corner

## Dental Assisting Moment: When Patients Play Practical Jokes

There is never a dull moment in the day of a DANB Certified Assistant. Diane Butler, CDA, of Plantation, Fla., knows this first hand, thanks to one patient's prank!



In July, Butler was working with the dentist to perform multiple extractions on a patient who had severe periodontal disease. "The patient's teeth had class-three mobility and we knew the bacterial and infection traveling through his body wasn't good for him," Butler says.

Butler and the dentist took the initial alginate impressions to make immediate dentures so that on the day of extractions, the patient would be able to go out in public without worry. "The surgery went well, and the patient was very happy with the result," Butler recounts.

The patient came back to the dentist's office multiple times for relines due to the tissue changing. On one of the reline visits, before the dentist entered the room, the patient explained to Butler that his tongue bubbled and sizzled for 30 minutes after cleaning his dentures. "It suddenly dawned on me that the patient had been putting the denture cleaning tablets in his mouth, instead of using the denture cup provided for cleaning and soaking," Butler says.

Immediately, Butler rushed to get the dentist, worried about the patient's safety. Butler explained to the dentist what the patient had said, and the dentist said he would review the proper cleaning process for dentures with the patient.

The dentist entered the examining room, greeted the patient and immediately discussed with the patient how to clean his dentures properly. Right after the dentist finished reviewing the instructions, the patient looked at Butler and laughed. "I was just kidding!" the patient said. "I'm not stupid, silly."

Butler was aghast. "I couldn't believe it," she said. I really believed him. How's that for a good joke!"

## Tribute to Carey Lynn Wolfe: Pillar of Portland's Dental Assisting Community

As the administrative assistant at Portland Community College's (PCC) Sylvania Dental Department since 2000, Ms. Carey Lynn Wolfe had a huge impact on dental assisting in Oregon. In addition to graduating from PCC's dental assisting program, Ms. Wolfe administered DANB's state exams at PCC for several years. DANB was saddened to learn that on July 16, Ms. Wolfe passed away from an aggressive form of stomach cancer. Ms. Wolfe was loved by family and friends, including the faculty and students at PCC. She is survived by her husband Bryan; and children Gabe, Dyanna and Carlene.



"My mother touched so many lives that there were students from other schools who knew of her," Dyanna noted. "In fact, the dental hygienist at my dental office told me that she had gone to visit a friend going through the PCC program and while waiting had met my mother. She stated that my mother had made an impression with how in charge of that office she was. Nothing got past her and yet she always made you feel welcome. I know that she will be missed by many of those who knew her but she left her stamp in so many ways on this world."

In memory of Ms. Wolfe, PCC established a scholarship in her name to be awarded to a PCC dental program student. Donations can be made to the PCC Foundation by sending a check or giving online at [www.pcc.edu/foundation](http://www.pcc.edu/foundation). For checks, donors should write "Carey Wolfe scholarship" on the memo line. For online donations, donors should select "Other" in the designation, and then type in "Carey Wolfe scholarship" on the online giving form. Staff can also drop off checks at the PCC Foundation office.

"A bubbly, outgoing, warm and friendly staff member, Carey will be missed dearly by the department, students, patients and her colleagues – including all of us on the Traditions, Rituals and Fun Committee with whom she planned details surrounding Inservice, the Winter Fest, the Luau and many other Sylvania activities," said Linda Gerber, Ed.D., PCC Sylvania Campus President.

## Tips For Certified Assistants To Market Themselves

Knowing how to market yourself can make all the difference in reaching your career goals, especially in a competitive job market. By holding DANB Certification, you already have an edge. DANB Certificants are valuable to employers because they have the verified knowledge and skills to perform dental assisting duties. Beyond maintaining DANB Certification, there are many ways to stand above the competition. If you are looking to advance your career, these tips can help you put your best foot forward.

**Know your strengths.** Identify the education, experience and special skills that distinguish you from others, and write them down. This list of strengths can be useful in updating your resume or in networking situations. In reviewing the list, look for any areas that might need improvement. Turning a weakness into a strength can be as simple as taking the next CDE course!

**Be professional.** Whether you are at work, going to an interview, or even performing volunteer dental services in the community, every moment is a chance to project your best self. Dress professionally and appropriately for the situation. Use a professional vocabulary. Remember, as a DANB Certified Assistant, you are a dental assisting professional!

**Be prepared.** Whether you are going to work, an interview or a seminar, arrive a few minutes early to orga-

nize yourself and your materials. Mentally review the tasks you would like to complete that day, and any potential obstacles. Preparation is key to success.

**Be a leader.** Not only a great networking opportunity, participating in your area's dental assistants association helps promote the dental assisting field, contributes to your overall professionalism and reinforces your commitment to your dental assisting career. Contact the American Dental Assistants Association to get in touch with your local chapter.

**Attend a tradeshow.** Tradeshows are a great way to connect with other dental professionals, view the latest dental products, attend seminars and clinics, and earn CDE hours. A list of national, state and regional dental tradeshows can be found in the DANB calendar that is mailed with the Winter *Certified Press* newsletter.

**Volunteer.** Volunteering is an excellent way to make connections in the community and practice your dental assisting skills, as well as give a hand to those in need, gain satisfaction, and to earn up to three hours of Continuing Dental Education (CDE). The CDE hours earned can count toward the 12 CDE hours needed for DANB recertification. Oral healthcare mission work, voluntary clinical work, or giving dental health presentations to students or community groups are all rewarding volunteer opportunities.

In addition to adhering to strict guidelines of separating the development of e-learning courses completely from DANB's Testing and Measurement department, DANB has taken great care to report on its initiatives. In order to continue to be recognized by the American Dental Association (ADA) as the national certification agency for dental assistants, DANB's exam programs regularly undergo review.

Every October, DANB submits its annual report to the ADA's Council on Dental Education and Licensure (CDEL) to assist CDEL in determining if DANB continues to meet CDEL's *Criteria for Recognition of a Certification Board for Dental Assistants*, as approved by the 1989 ADA House of Delegates.

In its 2008 report to CDEL, DANB noted that it was planning to respond to the numerous requests it has received to develop exam review materials and AB-CPs. DANB shared this report with the Board of Trustees of the American Dental Assistants Association at its Annual Meeting in San Antonio in September 2008.

**Climb the career ladder.** DANB's exams are recognized or required in 37 states, plus Washington, D.C. As a DANB Certificant, you may already meet some of your state's expanded duties requirements. Visit the state-specific section of DANB's Website at [www.danb.org](http://www.danb.org) to read excerpts from your state's dental practice act or check with your state dental board.

**Ask for more.** If your employer does not give you performance reviews, ask for them. It can be difficult to bring this topic up with an employer, but you deserve to know how you are performing on the job – what you are doing well and ways you can improve. To prepare for reviews, keep track of all the tasks you perform around the office, especially noting the ways you help improve your office's workflow and productivity. Bring this information in to the review so you can discuss it. Check out DANB's 2008 Certificant Salary Survey at [www.danb.org/PDFs/2008SalarySurvey.pdf](http://www.danb.org/PDFs/2008SalarySurvey.pdf) to get an idea of what salary is right for your area and practice type.

**Maintain DANB Certification.** Many employers look for or require DANB Certification. In fact, DANB often provides employers with lists of DANB Certified Assistants to assist with employee recruitment efforts. Maintaining DANB Certification is one of the best things you can do for your career, and it could be the stepping-stone to a bright dental assisting future.

DANB also reported on its e-learning initiatives at the January and July 2009 meetings of the Dental Assisting Review Committee (DARC), an advisory committee to the Commission on Dental Accreditation. Finally, DANB shared this information with the ADA's Council on Dental Practice (CDP), on invitation to report to the CDP at its May 2009 meeting.

Along with reporting its activities to the necessary organizations, DANB also wants to keep other stakeholders up-to-date on its e-learning initiatives. Therefore, DANB will develop a webinar on this topic, which will be delivered in late 2009 or early 2010. DANB will solicit participation by directors of CODA-accredited dental assisting programs and their educators, in order to:

- Provide up-to-date information,
- Make suggestions as to how these programs can assist educators in assessing whether or not their students are prepared to take DANB exams,
- Assist educators in providing information on dental office management knowledge and skills training, and
- Answer any questions about these new initiatives.

## E-Learning (cont'd)

It is important to note that e-learning courses are developed completely outside of DANB's Testing and Measurement department. DANB staff members and Subject Matter Experts associated with e-learning course development will have no direct contact with DANB exam content, exam committees or the Board of Directors during course development.

At its August 21-23, 2009 meeting, DANB's Board of Directors considered how to ensure that DANB's governing body and staff were best structured to manage the growing workload, maintain separation of key staff and Board functions to avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest, and therefore to enhance the opportunity for success of these new initiatives. DANB's Board of Directors approved the development of a new education and research foundation for this purpose. DANB's Board of Directors has established a Task Force, scheduled to meet October 30, 2009, to define the mission and develop the bylaws for this new foundation. Look to the Spring 2010 issue of *Certified Press*, scheduled to mail in late February, for more information.



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## You Could Be Next!

If your certification number matches one of the randomly selected numbers below, you can win a \$50 prize. Notify the DANB Marketing Department at haronovich@danb.org within 30 days to claim your \$50 prize. Be sure to include your name, address, and certification number.

188599	199898
184381	179899
126472	200730

### You Could be Next Winners!

Congratulations to Anne-Marie Costas-Kelley, CDA, from Massachusetts who was the "You Could Be Next" winner in the Summer *Certified Press!*

### We Want to Hear from You!

Tell DANB about your favorite dental assisting moments from the summer. We'll publish some of the best responses in the next issue of *Certified Press*. Submit your stories to haronovich@danb.org.

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## The DANB Mission

DANB's mission is to promote the public good by providing credentialing services to the dental community. We accomplish and measure the success of this mission through the creation of valid dental assisting exams, recertification requirement integrity, and valuable, visible, and accessible DANB exams and credentials. We also provide testing services to the oral healthcare community, and information services and resources related to dental assisting credentialing to support DANB's mission. In order to accomplish these critical outcomes, DANB is committed to a properly governed, financially secure, and administratively sound organization.