



8th District Bulletin

Volume 61 | Number 1 | Spring 2025

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The Dental Society is organized for the purpose of encouraging improvement of the health of the public, to promote the art and science of dentistry, and to represent the interests of the members of the profession and the public which it serves.

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From The Editor



In September 2024, US District Judge Edward Chen ordered the US Environmental Protection Agency to further regulate fluoride in drinking water as research indicated elevated levels of fluoride may cause a risk to the intellectual development of children. Judge Chen said, while it's not certain what amount of fluoride is causing such impairment, recent research points to high levels of fluoride in drinking water may harm the intellectual development in children. He ordered the EPA to take the necessary steps to lower this risk but declined to state what those measures would be. **1** In August, the National Toxicology Program stated with moderate confidence there is a link between high levels of fluoride exposure and lower IQ levels in children. **2** Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. has argued all fluoride should be removed from all public water supplies. He stated President Trump would recommend after his inauguration all US public water systems remove fluoride from the water. **3** Florida's Surgeon General, Dr. Joseph A. Lapado, on November 22, 2024, recommended against community fluoridation of water due to fluoride's possible neuropsychiatric risk. **4**

It did not take long for all the anti-fluoridation voices to be heard once Judge Chen made his ruling. The report

(Continued on Page 4)

From The Editor

(Continued from Page 3)

from the National Toxicology Program summarized reports from Canada, China, India, Pakistan, and Mexico. They found water containing more than 1.5 mg of fluoride per liter of water was consistently associated with lower IQs in children. The recommended level of fluoride from federal health officials since 2105 is 0.7 mg fluoride per liter of water. Prior to 2015, the recommendation was 1.2mg fluoride per liter. The WHO recommends a safe limit of 1.5mg. Approximately 0.6% of the US population has a fluoride level above the 1.5mg limit set by the WHO. All these water systems were ones with naturally occurring fluoride in the water.

The federal government has recommended community water fluoridation since 1950. While the recommended level has been changed, it was changed to try to decrease the incidence of fluorosis in teeth, not because it was detrimental to humans. If you look at the research, water fluoridation has decreased the amount of tooth decay in the general population. In fact, here in the city of Buffalo, water fluoridation was not in effect from 2015 until it was recently reintroduced in September 2024. Speaking with dentists who practice in Buffalo, during that time period there did seem to be an increase in the amount of decay patients were experiencing.

The American Dental Association has responded to this attack on community water fluoridation, particularly Dr. Lapado's. ADA President Brett Kessler, DDS stated "The ADA believes in the use of proven, evidence-based science when making public policy decisions. For Dr. Lapado to call community water fluoridation 'medical malpractice' and call on all municipalities to end its practice is a dangerous statement that stands to harm the oral and overall health of all Floridians." Dr. Kessler continued, "In a time during widespread misinformation and biased interpretation of research, the ADA remains committed to optimally fluoridating water at levels that are proven to be safe for the public." 5

The current recommended level of 0.7mg of fluoride per liter of water is less than half the 1.5mg upper level of the recommended dosage per liter of water. Rather than ending fluoride for all community water supplies, why not try to decrease the amount of fluoride in the water in areas where the concentrations are more than optimal. That seems like a more reasoned approach to the problem. Why throw the baby out with the bath water, if you will pardon the pun? Today, this should be a doable solution. I have heard the arguments for and against water fluoridation my entire dental career, from dental school forward. There is no set answer because life will always throw you a curveball. We just have to learn to hit it.

Sincerely,
Dr. Kevin J. Hanley

1. Fluoride in drinking water poses enough risk to merit new EPA action, judge says, CNN Health, September 25, 2024
2. US government report says fluoride at twice the recommended limit is linked to lower IQ in kids, apnews.com, August 22, 2024
3. RFK, Jr. says fluoride is an 'industrial waste' linked to cancer, diseases and disorders. Here's what the science says, CNN Health, November 4, 2024
4. Florida Health, State Surgeon General Dr. Joseph A. Ladapo Issues Community Water Fluoridation Guidance, Press Release, November 22, 2024
5. ADA objects to Florida surgeon general's stance on water fluoridation, ADA News, Volume 56, No. 1

From The President

Friends and colleagues,

Welcome to 2025! Composing this message is the first of many tasks for me as president of the 8th District Dental Society in what is sure to be a busy year. For those of you who don't know me, I'm a UB Dental graduate ('02), and a general dentist with a private practice in my hometown of Springville. I am also the program director of the Advanced Education in General Dentistry program at UB and have had a part-time teaching position there since completing my AEGD certificate program in 2003. Dentistry is full of opportunities for growth and leadership, and I have had the pleasure of serving as past president of OKU, the Fonzi dental study club, and the UB Dental Alumni Association, in addition to serving on many other councils and committees along the way. My path to this position began with a request to serve on the NYSDA Council on Ethics and as local ethics chair, which I have done for the past 9 years. Joining local leadership seemed reasonable, as I was already attending executive council meetings to report on ethics, and I've served for the past three years starting as secretary in 2021.



I'm happy to inform you that Dr. John Craig has agreed to continue as our executive director for the foreseeable future, and along with Dana and Kari, the daily operations at the district office will continue to run smoothly. Volunteer leadership is strong in our district, and I have the pleasure of working with many colleagues both young and seasoned. I'm looking forward to expanded collaboration with UB School of Dental Medicine this year regarding our continuing education offerings and better referral processes for our members and their patients to take advantage of its resources.

In an era of declining membership in many organizations, ours is committed to both increasing member numbers and providing value to members. While many states in the country have weak organizations, and California is considering removal of the tripartite membership requirement, New York is a role model, with hundreds of volunteers and well qualified leaders. We have a strong voice when it comes to lobbying efforts. While fluoride has made its return to the Buffalo public water supply, we will be faced with more questions about its efficacy and safety in the years to come both locally and nationally.

I have the privilege of standing on the backs of the giants who have come before me, and my goal here is to keep the ship upright and do whatever I can to bolster our position and advocate for our members. We have plans to strengthen our 8th District Dental Foundation, give our members additional platforms to reach out to our communities, and work to keep our organization financially viable through strategic forecasting and collaborative efforts with Fortress insurance our endorsed malpractice provider.

The reward for hard work is more work, and I have a lot of irons in the fire. Had I really thought ahead, I might have questioned my sanity working essentially two full time jobs, serving as your president, preparing for an accreditation site visit, and embarking on a second "world tour" as the drummer for Central Groove (WNY's favorite dentist band) all in the same year. When I was in college, I worked for a company that made yo-yos and juggling supplies. I learned how to keep a lot of things in the air at once, and I've continued to do so successfully in my professional life. Feel free to reach out with your questions or concerns through the district office or via email at rumfola@buffalo.edu. I'm looking forward to hearing from you, meeting with you and serving to the best of my ability this year.

Warmest regards,
Dr. Joseph Rumfola



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Executive Director's Note

Welcome to another year in organized dentistry. Last year, we experienced a few stark changes in programming with new House of Delegate resolutions and updates which included new membership models being piloted in six states among other shifts in member management with a new platform for ADA as well as CE support from NYSDA with CE Navigator. We are also moving into a new leadership year with a new 8th District President, Dr. Joseph Rumfola, who takes over for Dr. Robert Bochiechio. I'd like to thank Bob for his support and guidance through 2024.

We certainly had our share of challenges for fiscal stability and making membership relevant as new ideas and ways of conducting business across all levels are quickly forming. At the state level, we had a change in the Executive Director position with Michael Herrmann replacing Greg Hill as well as new EDPAC reorganization to a NYSDA PAC group, led by Trustees and others in the state association. It's certainly not been business as usual in some circles.

Locally, we were able to get fluoridation returned to the City of Buffalo public water system, after a 9-year hiatus, with the support of many leaders in our society, at the UB Dental School, and outside agencies and leaders. Now, some of that thought about public fluoridation is trending nationally as a new national spotlight on health and wellness are being challenged at the federal level. Both the ADA and NYSDA have continued to support the valid points of research and the direct benefits related to this mineral. We know its importance to young people as well as families who don't have a dental home or annual check-ups. We will continue our work to enlighten the community on its benefits.

Recently, we have learned that the UB Dental School is discontinuing the practice of offering continuing education (CE) workshops and seminars, both in-person and online. While the annual fall Buffalo Niagara Dental meeting will continue to provide an array of educational services for members and dental professionals, the ongoing monthly or other services have been discontinued. We are planning to assemble an Executive Council Ad Hoc Committee in February to examine what role the society will play in the absence of these services. If you have questions or would like to entertain ideas and support, please let Dr. Rumfola (rumfola@buffalo.edu) or myself know.

The importance of membership is becoming more paramount to our industry and profession. The ADA projects that perhaps as early as 2026, our collective national member base may fall below 50% for the first time in our association history. Not only does that weaken our legislative support for overall federal and state lobbying efforts to keep dental services and practices vital, the minority reflection allows other views to be more front and center. Ultimately, we lose ground in supporting our causes and what we, as professional oral health providers, want to see take place in our daily workplaces.

The 8th District Foundation is also launching 2025 Capital Campaign to increase our fiscal ability to support outreach and member services. Over the years, there have been a variety of dental student, dental school and community initiatives that we deem important and critical to our society and member identity. Fundraising or donations will allow these efforts to continue in a manner consistent with our mission and vision of local support. A letter asking for this sponsorship will be forthcoming in the next few weeks. We are also seeking donations to the Capital Campaign Kickoff event with Central Groove at The Sportsmen's Tavern in Buffalo on Sunday, February 23rd from 4-7pm. See the details within this publication or via the Weekly Update.

If you have any questions, as always, please reach out and I am happy to answer or research questions or inquiries you have at 716.995.6300 or via email jcraig@8ddsny.org. Thank you.

EDDS & ECDS President's Installation Dinner

For the first time in our history (or at least recent history), the societies joined together to host a joint installation event for their President and Officers at The Roycroft Inn in East Aurora. Eighth District President, Dr. Joseph Rumfola and Erie County President, Dr. Martin Gorkiewicz took their respective oath of office at the dinner ceremony with 90 guests. Fellow officers for the 8th District included: Drs. Michael Ehlers, Jennifer Frustino, Elizabeth Kapral and Joseph Modica. For Erie County, they included: Drs. Katherine Pauly, Amanda Torsney, Kaitlyn Taylor and Karl Neuhaus.

Master of Ceremonies for the event was Dr. Frank Barnashuk, with Past Presidents of each society, Dr. Robert Bochiechio (8th) and Dr. Amanda Cryan (Erie Co.) receiving their gavel plaques and offering their final comments on their year as society president. Five of the 19 Life Members who attended to receive their award, were: Drs. Bradley Ecker, Kurt O'Donnell, Anthony Peppy, James Wieland, and Walter Zimdahl, Jr. Special recognition awards were presented to Dr. Chester Gary, (Harvey Sprowl Award - 8th District), and Dr. Frank Barnashuk (Frank Stone Award – Erie Co.). Event sponsors were Walsh Duffield, Fortress, Ivoclar, and DDS Match with entertainment provided by Essence Unplugged.







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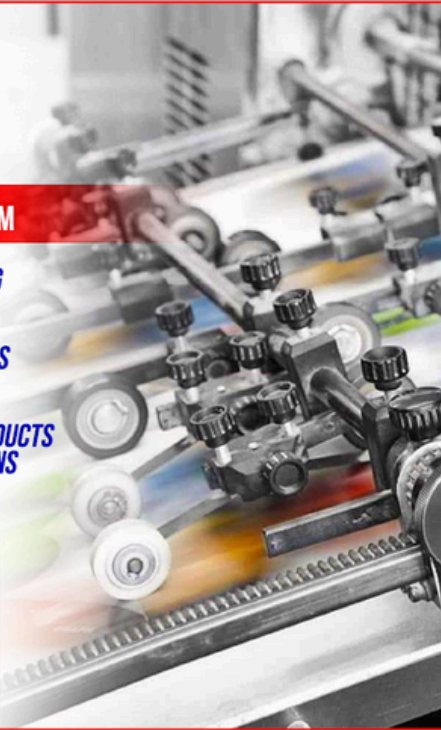
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2025

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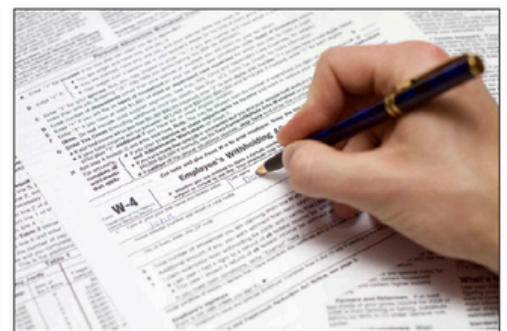
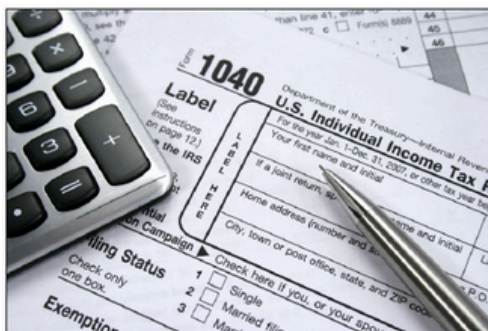
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Risk Management Insights

Guidance on Patient Noncompliance and the Dismissal Process

A valuable member benefit for Fortress policyholders is the availability of a dedicated patient safety and risk management team to discuss patient scenarios and offer guidance on noncompliant patient scenarios. We understand that noncompliance may present itself in the form of a failure to follow office policies or a refusal to follow the treatment plan or post-operative care. This can diminish the doctor-patient relationship and jeopardize the success of a treatment plan and, ultimately, the patient's oral health. This article outlines a progressive response that includes patient communication, clinical documentation, and the use of Fortress patient compliance resources to help mitigate noncompliant behavior while promoting patient safety.

Noncompliance: Contributing Factors and Mitigation Steps

Noncompliant behaviors are often exhibited in a pattern and can be attributed to one or more factors, including:

- a lack of understanding about the seriousness of a health condition;
- a lack of understanding of the details of the procedure or treatment;
- an inability to pay for care;
- a language, hearing or cognitive barrier; or
- anxiety or fear of treatment.

Steps can be taken early in the doctor-patient relationship to identify and mitigate these contributing factors to help encourage patient compliance. They include:

- Investigating the why behind a patient's noncompliance to allow you to address the matter early and encourage patients to participate in their care;
- approaching each situation with empathy;
- communicating clearly and concisely, using terms that the patient understands;
- considering when a face-to-face conversation between the treating provider and patient is best as opposed to delegating certain discussions to staff;
- using a qualified interpreter or interpreter service when a patient has a hearing or language barrier;
- training your office staff to be customer service focused when questions arise about billing or other non-clinical tasks; and
- setting expectations by discussing with the patient their responsibilities and role in ensuring a successful treatment plan.

Progressive Response

A progressive response to patient noncompliance helps the patient to understand that the provider and staff are working in the patient's best interest and encourages improved compliance. At the first sign of noncompliance, talk with the patient about your expectations and outline the risks of continuing the behavior.

While it is recommended the treating doctor lead these discussions, office staff will also want to document any specific interactions they have had with the patient. Documentation by both doctors and staff will provide evidence of the efforts made to educate the patient about the risks of continued noncompliance, to obtain a patient's compliance, and support why patient dismissal was considered should the patient later make allegations.



Guidance on Patient Noncompliance and the Dismissal Process

Patient Dismissal

Despite your best efforts, some patients may continue to engage in noncompliant or unacceptable behavior. Continuing a relationship with a patient that does not comply with your clinical recommendations or continues to display unacceptable behavior that impedes your ability to provide the best care, may lead to a poor outcome or put you at risk for allegations of supervised neglect. Patient dismissal can be more complicated when a patient is in the middle of a treatment plan. When the patient is mid-treatment, it is best to pause and reach out to Fortress to discuss all options before moving to patient dismissal.

If you decide patient dismissal is the next most appropriate step, consider a conversation with the patient that explains that, due to the continued noncompliance and the effect on the doctor-patient relationship, the patient will no longer be treated in the office. Memorialize this conversation through a formal dismissal letter. Fortress offers a customizable dismissal letter template at dds4dds.com. Become familiar with state laws and regulations related to emergency care for dismissed patients; it is generally recommended that 30 days notice be given to obtain the services of another provider.

Aggressive or Threatening Patients

If a patient is acting aggressively, unsafe, or threatening harm, notify your local authorities. In many of these cases, the progressive communication and documentation steps discussed in this article do not apply and immediate patient dismissal becomes necessary. After first taking the appropriate steps to ensure safety, call Fortress to discuss the case and obtain guidance on next steps.

Office Policy

Whether you have an existing patient dismissal policy or need to implement one, incorporating these patient considerations and communication and documentation steps can help direct a response to these situations and support your practice's efforts to gain patient compliance with the patient's best interest in mind.

Patient Noncompliance Resources

Fortress offers the following resources to assist policyholders with managing patient noncompliance and dismissal situations. The template letters are designed to provide general language and guidance; each policyholder should customize the language based on the specific patient scenario.

- A Guide for the use of Dismissal-Compliance Related Documents: This guide contains sample patient scenarios that can be helpful to review as a team.
- Missed Appointment Letter
- Noncompliance Letter
- Patient Dismissal Letter



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Appreciation Dinner

What has become more a tradition of late, the annual Appreciation Dinner for Executive Council and Foundation Board members took place on Tuesday, November 12th at 6:30pm. It is the official end of the year meeting for the Society and business matters as well as those for the Foundation. The past few events have taken place at The Saturn Club and hosted by Christine Garvelli, who is also a member of their Board.

It also marked a milestone anniversary with Walsh Duffield. The leading insurance carrier and supporting broker for our large group healthcare plan and Fortress celebrated their 50th year serving the members of the 8th District. To highlight that occasion, Christine Garvelli was there to be recognized for her work in support of our dentists, members and staff. Dr. Bochiechio shared an award to celebrate the event. They, in turn, sponsored the happy hour and dessert portions of the meeting and program.

Also, in attendance at this annual gathering, more recently, has been a visit from the NYSDA President-Elect for the coming year. Each year, the new leading officer visits local component districts to deliver their message of support, offer insights to state the dental profession, and take questions from the participants. The NYSDA President-Elect for 2025 is Dr. Maurice Jefferies from the 2nd District. He and his wife, Stephanie came to Buffalo to share time with our leadership group. We were glad to see him and discuss items of importance to our members and WNY dental community.



Annual Family Holiday Party

The Eighth District Dental Society held it's annual member's only Children's Holiday Party in early December at Transit Valley Country Club in East Amherst. Brunch was served, with desserts, and magician Mike Seege entertained those young and old. We also enjoyed the music of a barbershop quartet! Santa made sure to stop by to sit with each of the children! We hope everyone had a wonderful time, and we look forward to the next holiday party in December 2025.



Foundation Corner - Spring 2025

Dr. Nicole Hinchy
President

Eighth District Foundation Launching 2025 Capital Campaign and a Kickoff Event February 23rd – The Sportsmen’s Tavern

Last summer, during the Board Retreat, it was very apparent among participants that we needed to move the Foundation in a new direction. While the focus of the work historically has been largely to support dental students, community oral health, education, and the general wellbeing of members, funding for these efforts was beginning to dry up. Most of the foundation revenue comes from sponsorship, continuing education and registration dollars those activities generate. Since the pandemic, many educational programs have gone completely remote or online formats and less people are participating in face-to-face seminars. As a result, we have seen a significant reduction in foundation support.

The idea of a capital campaign was shared as a realistic opportunity to gain member support to continue our work in engagement. Therefore, a campaign letter will be shared in early February with our members seeking donations and support the overall mission. In addition to the campaign, we will be focusing on member outreach that is non-dental related and will coordinate some social friendly programs to include Buffalo Riverkeeper for environmental clean up as well as other events. More information will be shared soon regarding these family-friendly events and social outreach.

Finally, we will kickoff our campaign with a fundraiser at The Sportsmen’s Tavern in Buffalo featuring Central Groove on Sunday, February 23rd from 4-7pm. A good portion of ticket sales, raffles and a 50/50 will also allow us to get our fundraising goal in motion. Here is a link for tickets:

<https://www.showclix.com/event/central-groove-benefit>

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Erie County Dental Society



The Groove

Erie County Dental Society has already been hard at work to put together another great year for its members. Whether you are a recent graduate, just moved to the area, or retirement is just around the corner, you will find something for you. A variety of programs such as our Annual Ski Day and an upcoming CE regarding Medical Emergencies in the Dental Setting (bring the whole office!) are already coming up fast.

2025 is a great year to expand your professional network and be an active part of your local dental community. Erie County Dental Society provides you an opportunity to do that as a member and we encourage you to invite a friend to come along if you know somebody looking for a way to feel more connected. Additionally, if you have ever considered holding a position in organized dentistry, Erie County can provide a wonderful introduction, so we welcome you to talk to any of our board members to learn more.



Hello everybody,

My name is Martin Gorkiewicz and I am excited to serve the dental community and Erie County Dental Society as its President for 2025. I was born and raised in WNY and have remained here through college, dental school, residency, and now in practice as a general dentist at Dr. Bob's Dental Care in Cheektowaga. I currently live in Hamburg with my wife and two children. We love to travel and spend lots of time in nature.

I first became involved in Erie County Dental Society in 2019 and have found it to be a great way to stay involved and give back to our local dental community. It has also allowed me to stay connected and form new relationships with other dentists in the area. I have seen the impact that we can have when we collaborate and that we are truly greater than the sum of our parts when working together towards a common goal. Organized dentistry has provided the avenue needed to keep advancing our profession and to work to improve some of the bigger issues that both we and our patients must confront. I look forward to meeting more of you and learning how to best serve the members and community. Wishing everyone a great year ahead.



Respectfully,
Dr. Martin Gorkiewicz

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