Patient Advocacy Club inaugural visit to RDH Under One Roof

Like many of you, I have attended the RDH Under One Roof conference for many years because it is an arena that truly acknowledges the passion and professionalism that are characteristic of a dental hygienist. Over the past few years, I have had the great pleasure of meeting the dental hygiene leaders who were presenting continuing education courses, facilitating workshops, working for vendor partners, as well as the clinical hygienists who strive to enhance the comprehensive care that they provide on a daily basis.

My current role as Director, Dental Hygiene Support for Smile Brands has allowed me the opportunity to share this experience with affiliated dental hygienists. In knowing that dental hygienists are partners with the dentists to provide comprehensive care, we chose to recognize hygiene accomplishments by creating the Patient Advocacy Club, which honors outstanding commitment to dental hygiene with an all-expense trip to RDH Under One Roof. Specific criteria were established, a selection committee was created, and an invitation to all affiliated dental hygienists was initiated in October 2011.

In May 2012, the selection committee reviewed the applications, which were self-nominated or recommended by a colleague. Out of approximately 500 hygienists, three outstanding professionals were selected to represent their respective areas (East, Central, and West). These individuals were Mary Gacanica of Florida, LaQuita Earl of Houston, and MyTien Tran of Oregon.

Upon our arrival at RDH Under One Roof, I was immediately aware that I was in the presence of “extreme” dental hygienists. These ladies were ready to learn everything, meet everyone, and take what they learned back to implement even higher levels of care for their patients. Their excitement and enthusiasm was contagious and invigorating. I found it to be such a blessing to revisit RDH Under One Roof through the eyes of “first timers,” and that gift further empowered and challenged me within my own career.

I am honored to be a part of a company that values the profession of dental hygiene and recognizes the individual commitments of each provider in such a unique and special way, but I am more honored to have been able to spend three days with these amazing ladies.

Well, enough about me … let’s hear what the ladies had to say about the event.
Mary Gacanica, RDH
Bright Now Dental, Carrollwood, FL

I am, of course, very delighted to have had the pleasure of attending the RDH Under One Roof Conference last August in Las Vegas. This was an amazing event that was held for dental hygienists to receive continuing education courses and to network with the most successful and admirable people in the dental industry.

I feel very blessed to have had the opportunity to become a member of the Smile Brands’ Patient Advocacy Club this year. I feel that it is our passion and commitment to our patients that makes our profession so rewarding. In return, I was chosen, along with two other amazing hygienists to attend the 2012 RDH Under One Roof conference where we were able to advance our knowledge of the dental hygiene profession by listening to amazing speakers, learn about the most modern dental products, and meet some of the best dental representatives in the industry who were extremely gracious.

I want to give special recognition to Dan Dietz from Bright Dental for the wonderful dinner and spending the time to speak with us about the specialized instruments that are available and for the amazing customer service you provided. I want to also give gratitude to Larry Cross, vice president of sales for Dentist Rx. He spent the time to speak with us about their products, and it was fantastic to meet him and learn about the products they offer.

Lastly, I want to give specialized recognition to Mike Hatcher and his team from Philips. They were all extremely friendly and welcoming and took us to an amazing dinner that was one of a kind. They were all very knowledgeable about the importance of dental hygiene and that is the type of people that make the dental industry remarkable. Meeting these individuals was a phenomenal experience and I feel very grateful to have had this opportunity. Plus, we received a wonderful Welcome Bag filled with great goodies. Thank you, Oragenics, Philips, Hu-Friedy, Sullivan Schein, and GC America for your generosity.

Overall, I want to thank Sandy Johnson and the Smile Brands company for providing hygienists with an opportunity like the Patient Advocacy Club. The RDH Under One Roof conference was an amazing learning experience and I feel very blessed and empowered. This experience will allow me to grow in my dental hygiene career and will allow my patient's to receive the most optimal dental hygiene care.
MyTien Tran, RDH  
Bright Now Dental, Gresham, OR

I was honored that I was selected to be a part of the Patient Advocacy Club. It was such an unbelievable experience that I will never forget. I learned a lot of new information, refreshed my mind with old information, and brought back with me a new perspective on dental hygiene as a profession and my career. It was refreshing to experience dental hygiene through other hygienists’ eyes. Too often, we get stuck in our rut and how we practice hygiene, and it was nice to get away from our operatory and experience our world with the movers and shakers of our profession. It gave me a lot of motivation and encouraged me to make a difference.

As Sandy Johnson said, "The industry and profession changes one hygienist at a time. Change can be slow, intimidating, scary, etc., but the passion of professionals sharing their talents and strengths will change the environment. Dental hygiene is no longer a job for ‘teeth cleaners’ but is one in which hygienists expects science-based evidence, express their wants and needs, embrace challenges outside of their normal scope, and speaks up for the masses that will truly change the face of dentistry one hygienist at a time."

The Patient Advocacy Club allowed me to gain valuable knowledge that I will be able to take back with me so that I can share with other hygienists and to influence them to make positive changes. I learned that there are a lot more avenues that we can take as a hygienist to make a difference and it does not have to be just clinical work.

I had the privilege to meet our reps: Mike Hatcher from Philips Sonicare, Dan Dietz from Bright Dental, and Larry Cross from DentistRX who were so gracious in supporting us throughout our trip. They treated us so well and allowed us to get to know them personally. We learned so much about their companies and were able to understand their business goals and objectives. I feel honored that we are able to have a business partnership with these companies because they are supportive of our goals as a company. I want to personally thank them for their hospitality and generous efforts in making our time at RDH Under One Roof a great experience.

I would also like to thank Sonicare, Oragenics, HuFriedy, Sullivan Schein, and GC America that provided hygiene products in our gift bags that we received. I am so thankful to be involved in such a great profession. Finally, I would like to thank Sandy Johnson from Smile Brands who has inspired me to create a landscape of positive change in our profession and for having me a part of this wonderful life changing experience. Thank you!
LaQuita Earl, RDH  
Monarch Dental, Houston, TX

I would like to thank Smile Brands for giving me this opportunity to network with other hygienists all over the world. At this convention, I gained knowledge of the new products that are being introduced into dental hygiene; these products will promote patient compliance and aid in better results for their oral health. During this three-day conference, I learned about autoimmune diseases, systemic and oral health considerations, appropriate dental hygiene interventions, and ways to help navigate today's clinical challenges.

As a market hygiene coordinator, I was extremely grateful to learn more about how different generations view situations in very dissimilar ways and how that can affect the strategies I use to recruit, engage, manage, and retain the hygienists within our organization. By recognizing this key concept, it will help me collaborate with each individual hygienist differently depending on what generation they were born in.

I learned how to better advocate for supportive maintenance by just using facts like "Patients with periodontitis cannot maintain dentition with personal home care alone" and "Tooth loss in periodontal patients is inversely related to frequency of supportive periodontal therapy (STP)."

I can go on and on about the great experience I had during this conference and ALL the knowledge I have gained, but words cannot express the amount of gratitude and appreciation I have for Smile Brands for making this the best experience I have ever had while being a RDH and one I will never ever forget.

I also had the pleasure of meeting Dan Dietz from Bright Dental I want to thank him for the instruments that he gave us; they work great! We also had an awesome time meeting Mike Hatcher from Phillips; it was a pleasure to meet with him. Thanks so much for the Sonicare: Love it! Also, we had a great meeting with Larry Cross with Dentist RX; I had an awesome time and it was wonderful to meet him and learn about his company and customer service.

I am also thankful for the huge goodie bag with products that will definitely be used. Thank you so much Sonicare, Oragenics, HuFriedy, Sullivan Schein, and GC America; your generosity is greatly appreciated.

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It is clearly evident that the RDH Under One Roof conference greatly impacted for these individuals, and I am thankful to PennWell for their continued commitment to enhancing the profession of dental hygiene. I look forward adding additional members to the Patient Advocacy Club in 2013 so that more hygienists can experience this amazing opportunity and so the voice of dental hygiene can continue to get louder - one hygienist at a time.