



Musculoskeletal Pain and the Dental Health Care Community

Allan C. Jones, DDS, NSCA-CPT

This issue of the *Journal of the California Dental Association* is an attempt to bring to the dental profession of California, from many useful sources, some of the most helpful information from the current literature on exercise and posture. It is intended to foster the preservation of musculoskeletal health of dental health care workers.

Having been a dentist who has grappled with back and neck pain for more than 20 years, my attempts to understand musculoskeletal pain have been a matter of profound personal interest. I have searched for truthful and useful information from the multitude of sources. As I have taught “Occlusion and Facial Pain” at the University of Southern California for nearly 20 years, most of my searching has been from publications of the facial pain community, the occlusion community, and the health and fitness community. These sources have provided much useful information about the painful conditions that seem to affect so many dental health care workers.

Dentists are well-prepared for understanding pain and dysfunction of musculoskeletal origin, as this knowledge is essential to providing treatment for many dental patients. Our training and academic orientation as dentists give us an academic foundation from which to understand the literature from a vast

array of sources outside of our own field. This is especially true of the scientific literature on exercise from which this article on “functional training” was derived.

My pursuit of useful information regarding spinal pain led me to an organization I regard as the best source on matters related to exercise science: the National Strength and Conditioning Association. Having been certified by this group as a personal fitness trainer, I have been immersed in this world of elite professional coaches for many years. Dentists may benefit enormously from the lessons these individuals have learned regarding posture and fitness. Their prescriptions for exercise are developing and preserving the most talented athletes in the world; they can do the same for dental health care workers.

For the purpose of developing an exercise regimen for dental health care workers, I spent 12 weeks at the Athletes Performance Center in Carson, Calif. Their focus on preventing injury by developing superior posture through “torso” training is what I sought to learn. For 12 weeks, they coached me. The coaches analyzed the postural stress of seated dental workers and devised a series of exercises specifically for their needs. Shad Forsythe, the strength and conditioning coach for Galaxy, our local professional soccer team, was my coach and co-author during the weeks I spent training at their

Carson facility. This was one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of my athletic endeavors. I am very grateful for all they have done to improve my health and fitness for dental practice.

The scientific literature on postural issues exists largely in the domain of physical therapy. Literature about posture in the context of the work environment falls into the domain of ergonomics. There is a small, but useful body of literature in physical therapy and ergonomics that is relevant to dental practice. For this reason, I have invited Tim Caruso, a physical therapist and ergonomics expert, to contribute to this issue of the *Journal* as an added guest editor.

Tim is a popular speaker to audiences of dental meetings throughout the United States. While hosting Tim at one of these meetings, I realized his perspective on ergonomics and physical therapy could help the dental profession. For this reason, I invited him to bring information from his resources outside the realm of dental literature to the dentists of California in this edition of the *Journal*. CDA



Guest Editor / Allan C. Jones, DDS, NSCA-CPT, is a certified personal trainer through the National Strength Conditioning Association. He has been on faculty at the University of Southern California School of Dentistry since 1984 and has a practice in Torrance, Calif.