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## Interneships for Dental Hygienists

*By* ALICE D. FORD, '40

DENTAL HYGIENE casts a new light on dental health education. Oral prophylaxis plays an important part in dental health. It is a clean-cut preventative; it reveals the underlying and fundamental things, to which attention will have to be given later.

Man's intelligence, the knowledge of his body, its functions and needs are constantly growing. However, science is still striving to teach man that teeth are vital, living, important parts of our body.

The student who has attended the School for Dental Hygienists for one year is expected to give a thorough prophylaxis. However, if such a student fails to learn how to remove all of the stain and calculus from the teeth, this defect shows up when she enters the employ of a dentist. We should remember that the average dentist who is sufficiently interested to employ a hygienist will also very likely demand a high type of prophylactic service. Theoretical knowledge gained by the student is satisfactory, but she needs a great deal of supplementary instruction in the practical details. Of what, then, is the value of interneships?

Relief of illness, teaching and research compose the functions of a hospital. But the direct teaching of dental health is done by the dental hygienist. Interning furnishes an opportunity for the dental hygienist to become familiar with the service of dental health in advance of formal appointment. Upon entering a hospital to serve an interneship she learns for the first time in her life that she is liable for her acts not only as an individual member of society, but also as a professional woman. This sense of responsibility necessitates wider knowledge, more maturity of judgment and better poise. One cannot graduate a scale of human performance with the same precision that one can graduate a thermometer scale. Today much stress is put upon learning by doing. Interning gives the dental hygienist a new incentive to grow and to develop her individual maximum ability to render service to patients. By growing and developing we get an efficient den-

tal hygienist. She is one who possesses the following characteristics:

1. Appearance of self-control.
2. Desire and willingness to work.
3. Cheerful and pleasant manner.
4. Ability to listen to directions and follow them.
5. Willingness to accept criticisms and profit by them.
6. Well-groomed and clean habits.

The development of a sufficient number of internships on a truly educational basis seems to be the best assurance for our future needs. The participant learns to appreciate good work and incidently acquires an enthusiasm to inspire a similar appreciation in others. For this reason, additional training seems an ideal medium and should furnish the leaven for vitalizing the whole educational structure. There is a big field in public health for the dental hygienist, particularly in school work, where probably she is of greatest value. However, only when she is trained not only in dental hygiene but also in public health, psychology and mental health can she successfully perform her duties. Let us then elevate the dental hygiene profession with continued study, careful observation, and wider experience, by advocating internships.

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