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## AN ATTEMPT TO LOOK AHEAD

By LAVINIA JONES, D. H., '41

**N**OW, that the time has come for us to close our books and lay aside our instruments for final and comprehensive examinations, our thoughts are forced to wander to the immediate future. That future beyond the state board examination.

We have been told that our field is limited, that, for Negroes, it is harshly restricted. It pays to know this and to direct our efforts in the more liberal avenues of our profession. There are liberal and lucrative avenues, but which one we choose depends upon our desires and ambitions.

Without stretching my imagination, I can list, off hand, at least six types of employment that we may seek in the field of dental hygiene. They are first, in the private office of a legally licensed dentist; second, in the dental department of a hospital; third, in the federal or state public health department; fourth, in municipal institutions, usually schools; fifth in any public clinic authorized by a board of health; and sixth, by the board of health.

Now, to stretch the imagination a little, I can see a hygienist working for a dental concern which sells dental supplies or one selling toothpaste or powder. She may even be a traveling sales lady, going from board of education to board of education or from clinic to clinic in an effort to interest these organizations in her company's new invention or what have you.

Perhaps, a brief review of some of the types of employment listed above will direct our interest along some profitable and interesting avenue of dental hygiene. Let us consider first, the dental office of the private practitioner; for most of us will probably be so employed. Our duties will be many. We will be cleaning and polishing the teeth of patients and teaching them the value of hygienic care of the teeth and the use of the toothbrush. There will be defects in the mouth to be checked and recorded, diets to be suggested, especially to pregnant women and young children. There will be calls, lists to be checked, office and waiting room to be kept tidy, monthly statements to prepare, supplies to be checked, petty cash to handle. Along with this, there will be the telephone to answer, the instruments to sterilize and keep ready for use. X-rays to take and develop, and, at times, we may be called upon to aid

in giving anesthetics. The dentist may want us to help in the laboratory. If so, we will be working with plaster, metals and alloys; or mixing synthetic porcelain, amalgam, crown and bridge cement; or perhaps using the polishing lathe or investing. We may pack and trim amalgam models, heat bridge cases for soldering and run impressions for dentures and bridges. A variety of other things may also be requested of us. This variety should make the position more enjoyable to us and break the monotony.

Many large hospitals, especially general hospitals employ dental hygienists in their dental departments. If any of us care to consider this avenue, we will find the work much like that carried on in the private office. There might not be any laboratory work to do. The mouths of all ward patient's will have to be examined and arrangements made for any dental work to be done at a time that will not interfere with the regular hospital routine. Some cases will require bedside prophylaxis, but on the whole most of the work will be done in the dental operating room.

Government and marine hospitals, and institutions employ more hygienists than do general hospitals, but wherever employed in this field, we will be working in cooperation with nurses, dietitians, physiotherapists—all specialists in the fields, and we must govern ourselves to the situations we meet and be diplomatic in handling all cases.

This phase of dental hygiene is well worth considering for the salary range is from \$1440 to \$1800 per annum.

If it should be our luck to find employment in any of the state board of health programs, we should probably find the work adventurous and exciting. In this field the hygienist travels all over the state inspecting groups of pre-school children at conference schools and other group gatherings. We must inspect the mouths, notify the parents of any defects, give prophylactic treatment, and some class instruction. We may make home visits, give talks on oral hygiene to adult groups, and assist with health programs in various communities. At other times part of our work may be in state institutions, such as orphanages and sanatoriums. In this state work we would be cooperating with doctors, teachers, dentists, public health nurses, and nutritionists. We would be practicing, teaching, recording, and collecting reliable and educational facts on dental health.

In my home state, Connecticut, the hygienist so employed, attends child conferences and summer round-ups of children enter-

ing school in the fall. Usually she drives a car in which she carries a portable chair, sterilizer, day-light screens, and lantern slides, in fact, all necessary equipment. She meets the mothers and instructs them in diet and oral hygiene, examines the children's teeth, and cleans the teeth of all between the ages of two and six.

Nine other states along the Atlantic coast employ such persons to take care of their rural areas.

In the federal set up we might be able to consider army camps and institutions where we will assist the army dentist in all of the fields of dentistry and give prophylaxis whenever called upon to do so.

A high rating in a Civil Service Examination or State Merit Examination is necessary for appointment.

Many of us yearn for the public school system, and well we might, for here we would be a technical worker in the school clinic and an instructor in oral health, and we would draw a very ample salary. In this field as in public health work in most places, a college degree or teacher's certificate as well as a hygienists certificate is required. Nevertheless, its possibilities are most attractive. About three months of the school year are devoted to the examining of the mouths of all children in the elementary school; the rest of the time is spent doing educational work. Each hygienist has a group of schools which she visits in turn. She checks the defects corrected and gives a series of health programs. There may be class room talks, plays, stories, or movies, arranged for either parent, children or both.

Tact is required because one must work in close association with teacher, nurse, school, doctor, and dentist, all of whom are doing some sort of follow up work. Any over-lapping of duties could be annoying.

Some of us may be employed in clinics, private or municipal. Here we may work as an assistant to a dentist, give dietary instructions to pre-natal cases and mothers of young children. It would closely resemble the work of that in a private office with regulated hours.

Last, but not least, is the field of individual endeavor. The independence felt here is sometimes to be desired. The hygienist may rent office space in a dental office with a legally licensed dentist and pay for this space by sharing part of her income from prophylaxis with the dentist. This is a most lucrative field if personality, ability, and ambition are among our traits. Here the hygien-

ist may transfer her patients to the dentist, and he his patients to her. A basis of cooperation is necessary and desired.

Whatever avenue we may choose, it is well to remember that our field is relatively new; and that imagination, initiative, and originality make our job, broaden our field, and give us the ability to advance. Whatever state, city or town we locate in, we should learn how to take advantage of the health and social agencies and keep ourselves alert to existing conditions in our profession. We must be pleasant, tactful, self-controlled, and keen in our perception of others; for we will be builders in the field of dental hygiene.



A man asked to define the essential characteristics of a gentleman—using the term in its widest sense—would presumably reply, “The will to put himself in the place of others; the horror of forcing others into positions from which he would himself recoil; the power to do what seems to him to be right without considering what others may say or think.”—John Galsworthy.