

Preface



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Guest Editor

During the past decade, dental treatment for special needs patients has received national attention. These patients face unique challenges in accessing oral health care. Special needs patients traditionally have been treated by pediatric dentists, and general dentists often are not trained adequately or do not have the necessary physical facilities to provide optimal care. As the patients reach adulthood, it becomes increasingly difficult to continue treatment with a pediatric dentist or to find a general dentist who is willing and appropriately trained to deal with complex behavioral management issues.

Dental schools have become aware of this national dental problem and have made inroads to incorporate special needs training in their respective core curricula. Schools like S.U.N.Y. Stony Brook School of Dental Medicine have partnered with hospital general practice residency programs (New York Hospital Queens) to include special needs training in a postgraduate setting.

A combination of current trends, increased interest, and lack of comprehensive education to our profession has stimulated the idea that a text devoted to the special needs dental patient was long overdue.

Mr. John Vassallo, the Editor of *Dental Clinics of North America*, spearheaded the initiative to develop a “world class” text that would clearly define the aspects and issues that face the special needs dental patient.

I was humbled to accept the guest editorship of this very important issue. Our primary goal was to make a very readable and informative issue that would touch all the relevant elements of special care dentistry, including access, definition, disease entities, treatment options, and national trends. We assembled the best practitioners in special care dentistry to develop articles in their particular areas of expertise. Of course, the outcome of this outstanding edition of *Dental Clinics of North America* is dedicated to the oral health care of all special needs patients.

I thank my wife, June Wasserman, my children, grandchildren, and my entire family as well as my hospital support staff and private practice staff for their love and patience during the preparation of this important project.

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