

Preface



Gary A. Colangelo, DDS, MGA
Guest Editor

During the twentieth century, the dental profession gained remarkable technological advances that improved the oral health of many Americans. Systemic and topical fluoridation, the air rotor hand piece, and local anesthesia dramatically prevented disease and made surgical care efficient and painless. Despite these advances, access to optimal oral health care is limited or nonexistent for at least 40% of Americans. If the goal for Americans is to improve their oral health, the means to reach this goal is to improve access. Oral health care access includes more than receiving appropriate professional care. Access to disease prevention interventions and oral health knowledge also are essential to reach the goal of optimal oral health.

This issue of *Dental Clinics of North America* addresses the issue of oral health care access from multiple perspectives. Access is a complex issue with numerous variables and no absolute correct answers to improve access. This issue is an overview of oral health care access topics and not a comprehensive treatise. Health care professionals, policy makers, and advocates should find touch points of understanding and insight into potential solutions to improve access. The authors have provided extensive references for the reader to gain in-depth knowledge on a particular topic.

Through my 38 years of experiences as a dentist (formerly in private practice, a dental school faculty member, and most recently the director for a regional dental insurance plan), I have developed my own perspective of oral health care access issues. From my understanding of access and my work experiences, I am optimistic that we can improve the oral health of Americans by improving access. I am confident this will happen, because of the many dedicated and knowledgeable oral health and non-oral health professionals, policy makers, and advocates who continue to toil and innovate on improving access.

Twenty-two authors provided their thoughts and experiences for this issue. They have been a joy to work with, and I thank all authors for their time and effort. John Vassallo, Editor of the *Dental Clinics of North America*, has been patient, flexible, and understanding as the manuscripts were completed. I acknowledge the publisher,

Elsevier, for continuing to publish *Dental Clinics of North America*, a unique forum for sharing oral health knowledge.

Gary A. Colangelo, DDS, MGA
Baltimore College of Dental Surgery
Dental School
University of Maryland
39 Kenmare Way
Rehoboth Beach, DE 19971-1071, USA

E-mail address:
garycolangelo2@comcast.net (G.A. Colangelo)