



## Dental hygienists' role in the opioid syndemic: Assessing attitudes, perceptions, and practices

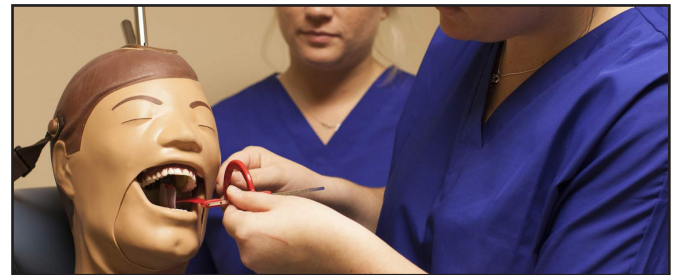
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### Abstract:

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to assess dental hygienists' role in recognizing opioid use disorder (OUD) and to determine the relationship between attitudes and perceptions, interprofessional collaboration, and level of training in evidence-based screening tools. **Methods:** This cross-sectional study was conducted using the validated Drug and Drug Problems Perceptions Questionnaire (DDPPQ). The survey was distributed to a convenience sample of dental hygienists (n=197) using Texas Dental Hygiene Association components' official Facebook® pages, for seven weeks. Survey items included demographics, professional characteristics and employment, DDPPQ subscales related to attitudes and perceptions, interprofessional relationships, and training in evidence-based screening tools. Responses collected in Qualtrics®XM, were imported into SPSS® Version 25 for data analysis. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to associate the data. **Results:** The survey completion rate was 90.9% (n=179). Respondents' attitudes and perceptions were assessed by measuring the DDPPQ subscale results of role adequacy, role legitimacy, role support, and role motivation and self-efficacy (p<0.01). Only 3% of respondents reported working closely with other professionals; exhibiting significance to each subscale (p<0.01). 13% of participants reported training in evidence-based screening tools for opioid abuse; group statistics found significant relationships to subscales of role adequacy, support, and motivation and self-efficacy (p<0.05). **Conclusion:** Results from this study combined with existing research, indicate the need for increased interprofessional involvement and OUD education amongst practicing dental hygienists. Dental hygienists that perceive themselves as knowledgeable, prepared, and supported, are shown to exhibit increased security and commitment toward their evolving role, leading to better comprehensive care outcomes.



### Biography:

Michelle DeMoss received her Bachelor of Science degree in Dental Hygiene from Idaho State University in 1996, and her Master of Science degree from University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio (UTHSCSA), Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences in December 2019. Ms. DeMoss has worked as a clinical dental hygienist for 24 years. For the last seven years, she has been a dental hygiene faculty instructor at Lamar Institute of Technology (Texas, USA), and thrives on educating future dental hygiene professionals. She currently teaches Pharmacology, Periodontology, Pre-Clinical Dental Hygiene, Clinical Introductory, and Clinical Dental Hygiene. She has served four years as a leader and faculty advisor, in the Student Chapter of the American Dental Hygienists' Association (SCADHA). Ms. DeMoss was selected by UTHSCSA to receive the Council for Excellence in Women's Health Award, three years in a row (2017-2019). She was also recently elected for faculty membership into the prestigious Sigma Phi Alpha, National Dental Hygiene Hon-or Society. She is an active member of the American Dental Hygienists' Association (ADHA), the Texas Dental Hygienists' Association (TDHA), and the American Dental Education Association (ADEA). The direction of Ms. DeMoss's research study was guided by National Health Objectives aimed at opioid use disorder (OUD) intervention, along with the need for additional research.

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