Looking Ahead to 2020

By Dr. Priya S. Chand, MDS, MS
Chair of Mentoring

It is clear that we have come a long way over the past 10 years with the commitment of Endodontists to seek board certification. This is partly due to the individuals who encourage and mentor candidates in their quest to achieve this important goal. The College of Diplomates (COD) mentorship program has enabled us to reach more than 250 candidates at a national and international level. This success is primarily attributed to the time, effort and dedication of Endodontic mentors.

In 2020, The College of Diplomates will celebrate its tenth anniversary sponsoring of the annual Board Review Course. During the course, mock oral examinations are offered to candidates preparing to challenge the American Board of Endodontics board examination. Undoubtedly, this continues to be a great preparatory opportunity for the candidates on their board certification journey. The COD is also working to update study aides, posted on the website, to support oral board preparation.

The positive feedback from candidates serves as a catalyst for encouraging and motivating others to seek mentorship sooner than later in their pursuit of...
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Diplomate status. As a mentor, it is humbling and rewarding when receiving this feedback from candidates:

‘The preparation principle of the College of Diplomates is based on a mentorship model—caring philosophy. The mentors are truly dedicated in their role in providing formal and informal guiding, coaching, teaching, supporting, role modeling, advocating and sharing. As a candidate, these qualities are what I needed the most to succeed. The mock-examination is treated just like the actual exam, which takes the fear of unknown away and additionally providing honest and constructive feedbacks.’

The 10th Annual Board Review Course will be held at the University of Maryland from January 31–February 2, 2020. We would like to extend an invitation to candidates interested in participating in the mock oral examination. If you know of anyone who is seeking board certification and may be interested in this opportunity, the mock oral exam is scheduled for Thursday Jan 30, 2020. You can sign up as an examinee or as an examiner (cases or orals) by contacting Aimee Rylko at info@collegeofdiplomates.org or Dr. Priya S. Chand at endodent2002@gmail.com.

Registration is open, please check our website for full program details.

We are so excited to co-host our Board Review Course with UMB, an institution rich with culture and history. There are so many attractions both within the University and surrounding area for attendees to soak in while visiting the Baltimore area, including the Samuel Harris Museum of Dentistry which has a 40,000 object collection of dental instruments, furniture, and artwork and is a must see while in Baltimore. It is one of the oldest museums in the world, tracing its roots to the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery, the world’s first college of dentistry, founded in Baltimore, MD in 1840. The museum is designated by Congress as the official museum of the dental profession in the U.S.
Prior to becoming actively involved with the College of Diplomates (COD), I felt inadequately prepared to mentor colleagues who were challenging the American Board of Endodontics (ABE) Board-Certification Examination. I wanted to give back to the community that supported me in becoming a Diplomate of the ABE, yet I didn't know how to 'engage' as a mentor. So how did I go from feeling woefully unprepared to mentor ABE Board candidates to someone who actively looks forward to providing mock oral boards and reviewing case portfolios? The answer: One step at a time. With each small step, I gained confidence in my ability to be an endodontic mentor of value.

My first step to mentorship was personal. I identified a void and filled it. While preparing for my own ABE Oral Examination, I solicited potential study aides from a program director and received the following guidance, ‘Study Pathways of the Pulp, The Dental Pulp, and current and classical endodontic literature.’ I thanked the individual for his advice and promptly vowed to share my study material with as many future Board candidates and endodontic residents as I could. Why reinvent the wheel? Hence, upon achieving ABE Diplomate status, Drs. Randy Todd, Stephen Tsoucaris and I submitted our updated ‘Index Cards of Endodontic Literature for the Oral Exam’ for the COD to post on its website (collegeofdiplomates.org/boardpreparation/studyaids). Sharing our detailed notecards with future ABE candidates represented a promise fulfilled. Since then, I’ve witnessed how this small, but focused, contribution grew to multiple comprehensive study aides hosted on the COD’s website and led to multiple updates to our original submission. As a novice mentor for Board candidates, these detailed study-aides serve as invaluable reference material from which to create mock Oral Board questions, and aides to the candidates in their review of endodontic concepts, and the current and classic literature to support their practice of endodontics.

My second step to engaging as a mentor grew from a personal observation made while preparing for the ABE examination. While studying with fellow endodontists Drs. Todd and Tsoucaris for the Oral Boards, I noted that each of us brought unique value to our study group. It was then I realized that the journey to ABE Board certification followed many different paths and learning styles. Visual stimulation of images, charts and diagrams worked for some, while for others, the stimulation of speaking and writing enhanced the ability to recall learned information. Solitary preparation best served some candidates’ learning style, while social interaction better served others. The COD strives to offer continuing education and mentorship that reflect these diverse learning styles: three-day scientific Endodontic Board Review courses, individual mentorship, varying study-aides, video testimonials and conference calls, each providing unique study modalities with the goal of knowledge acquisition.

I launched my formal journey to become a mentor by contacting the COD and volunteering to be a mentor. Yes, I felt unprepared and a bit intimidated, but the call to service pushed me to act. I first reviewed case history portfolios for ABE Board candidates. Refreshingly, I learned that the COD Board of Directors actively supports new volunteer mentors and always made time to answer any questions I had regarding a candidate's portfolio. Once engaged with the COD as a mentor, I came to appreciate our organization as an endodontic community that energetically and humbly served our endodontic colleagues and dental specialty. Also, the ABE (aae.org/board) provides clear guidelines regarding the expectations of the case history portfolio and the oral examination.

I then took the big plunge and offered to give mock oral boards for local residency programs. With that, Drs. Clara Spatafore and Garry Meyers invited me to participate in Virginia Commonwealth University’s semi-annual mock Oral boards in Richmond, VA. Again, why reinvent the wheel? Rather than overthink the process, I built an
oral exam scenario using one of my own ABE portfolio cases and used the study-aides on the ‘BoardPreparation’ tab on the COD’s website to write questions. Partnering with another seasoned mentor provided grounding support as a first time oral examiner. After the first day of examining residents, I was hooked! The residents' energy and enthusiasm inspired me, and the community of fellow examiners provided a professional home to actively volunteer one's time and expertise.

Potential mentors may wonder, ‘How can I get comfortable offering a mock oral examination or reviewing case portfolios? It’s been a few years since I became a Diplomate? Can I realistically be of value to the ABE Board candidates?’ The answer is: YES! Go for it! Remember, the Directors of the COD coach new mentors and are available to answer your questions, and the ABE provides ‘The ABE Boardwalk’ presentation at the American Association of Endodontists’ Annual Session, as well as the COD Board Review Course. Bottom line is that you will not be alone.

Lastly, once immersed in mentoring ABE Board candidates, I came to actively look forward to providing mock oral examinations. Commonly, candidates know the material for the examination, but lack adequate familiarity with structure of the examination, and how to verbalize a succinct answer and move to the next question. Learning the cadence, structure and expectations of each of the ten areas covered within the examination, greatly enhances the candidates chances of successfully achieving ABE Diplomate status. In just one or two 30 minutes sessions, candidates improve their ability to answer questions, learn to appreciate the rhythm of the examination process and identify additional areas needed for study. Whether you meet your candidate in person or by video (Skype, FaceTime or WhatsApp), the personal and professional growth of both parties is immeasurable. The mentored individual gains the skills and confidence to achieve ABE Board-Certification and the mentor gains personal and professional rewards from assisting fellow endodontists in achieving the highest recognition in the endodontic profession: the lauded status as Diplomate of the ABE. So yes, you may feel unprepared to mentor ABE Board candidates, but trust yourself. You don't have to reinvent the wheel to be a valued mentor to ABE Board candidates. Jump in; let the COD assist you. On the flip side, if you have been affiliated with an institution and feel comfortable mentoring, please reach out to the COD to mentor ABE Board candidates and/or new COD volunteers. Fresh or seasoned, join the College of Diplomates mentorship team and realize the profound rewards that mentoring the next generation of Diplomates of the ABE brings. ✪
If you could capture the future of endodontics in one photo, what would it look like? You might picture some expensive, brand new clinical technology, but the answer is already in your hand. By using Instagram, you can share important messages about saving teeth with your community.

A number of Endodontists and some even Diplomates of the American Board of Endodontics have started using Instagram to do just this, and it’s been a game-changer for patients, general dentists and budding endodontists who follow them on the app.

Dr. Geoff Sas and Dr. Jason Foreman, who were pinned at the April 2019 American Association of Endodontists meeting in Montreal, organized an impromptu event for endodontists using Instagram. It was an exciting gathering, where friendships initiated virtually were strengthened with a personal meet and greet. These photos capture just a few of those #Insta-Endodontists who attended. This gathering truly signifies the future of our specialty; using Instagram to build a bigger audience, raise more awareness, and improve dental health worldwide.

There’s room for you to join us at the table. I’d love to invite you to start a professional Instagram account if you don’t already have one, and encourage you to follow your colleagues. Try hashtags like #endodontist, #endodontists, #dentistsofIG, #worthsaving and #saveteeth to grow your reach. You can use the app as just one more way to connect with the public and share the importance of saving teeth, one patient at a time.

To name a few of those pictured (sorry still meeting everyone):

- Dr. Geoff Sas @yorkhillendo
- Dr. Jason Foreman @dhjasonforeman_endo
- Dr. Sonia Chopra @soniachopradds
- Dr. Judy McIntyre @drujudyendo
- Dr. Stephanie Tran @her_holiness_the_pulp
- Dr. Neil Singh @neilsinghendo
- Dr. Peter Ham @peter.allen.dds
- Dr. Paulina Erdle @paulina.erdle
- Dr. Ahmed Salman @abs.endo
- Dr. Elliot Haybarger @sleepyendo
- Dr. Viraj Vora @virajendo
- Dr. Marcus Johnson @cityendodontics
- Dr. Nishan Odabashian @end0dabashian
- Dr. Bobby Nadeau @nadeau.endo

Stay tuned for information on the 2020 Summer Conference!

August 14–16, 2020
Stowe Mountain Resort
Stowe, Vermont