

Dental Hygiene Internships Enhance Career Opportunities for BS Program Graduates

THE DENTAL HYGIENE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM — a requirement for all bachelor's degree in dental hygiene students — was introduced in 1992 as a means of fostering interprofessionalism, innovation, reflection, and assessment capabilities. “Our Bachelor of Science program is housed within the world's most comprehensive dental education, research, and patient care center, which enables us to offer distinct experiences not afforded to students attending community college-based dental hygiene programs,” explains Ms. Rosemary Hays, internship coordinator and clinical associate professor of dental hygiene. “These internships inform students of various aspects of health care beyond the scope of clinical practice.”

Originally consisting of four specialized focus areas — education, research, law and ethics, and corporate pharmaceutical sales — the internship curriculum now includes courses in allied health fields such as nursing, geriatrics, and public health. “Outreach opportunities also have been added,”

says Ms. Eva Lupovici, adjunct clinical professor of dental hygiene and former internship coordinator. “Many graduates credit these courses with advancing their didactic knowledge and preparing them to succeed professionally,” she adds. Mr. Dushyanthan



Dushyanthan Nithiyananthasothy, BS, '14

Nithiyananthasothy, '14, a part-time dental hygienist in private practice and an adjunct clinical instructor of pediatric dentistry and of dental hygiene at the College, credits the internship program with shaping who he is today. He completed two internships during his third year. “The guidance and support I received from faculty throughout both courses led me to pursue careers in pediatric dentistry and in teaching,” says Mr. Nithiyananthasothy, who did his first internship in 2012, delivering preventive oral health services to children in Poughkeepsie, New York, as part of the NYU Dentistry/Henry Schein Cares Global Student Outreach Program. His second internship, which took place in 2013, focused on clinical teaching and included training with Associate Professor of Pediatric Dentistry Jill B. Fernandez. Under Professor Fernandez's tutelage, Mr. Nithiyananthasothy provided dental hygiene instruction to first- and second-year DDS students and learned how to communicate effectively with pediatric patients in a clinical setting.

Each supervising mentor plays an essential role in his or her intern's rotation evaluation. As a final grading component, interns must submit a brief essay detailing their experiences. In order to stimulate peer review and discussion, the essays are shared with other dental hygiene students via NYU Classes, an online forum for faculty/student and student/student exchanges.

Half of all dental hygiene internships are located within the College, where students interact with dental hygiene faculty, general dentists, specialists, and research faculty. Ms. Kaitlin Stier, AAS, '10,



Rosemary Hays, RDH, MS



Eva Lupovici, RDH, MS



Cheryl M. Westphal Theile, RDH, EdD



Kaitlin Stier, AAS, '10, BS, '11

BS, '11, pursued her internship outside of NYU Dentistry, as the first dental hygiene student intern in the Manhattan Veterans Administration (VA) Hospital dental clinic. "Participating in the VA internship provided a great way to explore a different and exciting aspect of the field by working in a hospital setting. My experience exposed me to the broad array of roles that a dental hygienist can play in promoting public health," says Ms. Stier, who credits the VA with strengthening her confidence and ability to interact with patients with special needs.

Ms. Stier also discovered a passion for teaching through the internship program. Today she ranks among the 50 percent of NYU College of Dentistry's dental hygiene faculty who are NYU alumni. "Many of our alumni participated in the education track and are supervising students themselves today," says Professor Hays.

Dr. Cheryl M. Westphal Theile, clinical professor of dental hygiene and assistant dean for allied health

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