

NYU's Dental Hygiene Program Celebrates Silver Anniversary



Cheryl M. Westphal Theile, RDH, EdD

Assistant Dean, Allied Health Programs;
Clinical Professor of Dental Hygiene
NYU College of Dentistry

In the late 1980s, following the cessation of the dental hygiene program at Fairleigh Dickinson University (FDU) College of Dental Medicine, the program's director, Dr. Cheryl M. Westphal Theile, approached former Dean Edward G. Kaufman with the idea of establishing a dental hygiene program at NYUCD. Dean Kaufman supported the idea, and, in 1990, an Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree program in dental hygiene was established with Dr. Westphal Theile as director. With this act, NYUCD became the only dental school in New York State to offer a dental hygiene program. Dr. Westphal Theile currently serves as assistant dean for allied health programs and clinical professor of dental hygiene.

In its first year, the program enrolled two classes, consisting of a total of 40 students—20 in the day session and 20 in the evening session. Initially under the direction of a core group of three full-time faculty members, Dr. Westphal Theile, Ms. Eva Lupovici, now a part-time clinical professor of dental hygiene, and the late Ms. Ann Goodwin, the program moved forward quickly. "We managed all of the lectures and clinics, and willingly devoted as many as 20 hours a day to ensure that we would develop the strongest possible program," says Professor Lupovici.

NYU's Dental Hygiene Program today consists of a diverse, 185-member student body and offers a variety of flexible curriculum options for students. These include a 17-month "fast track" AAS program, introduced in January 2015; both a two-year and a three-year AAS program; a four-year Bachelor of Science in Dental Hygiene program; and a degree completion Bachelor of Science

2010

NYUCD/Henry Schein Cares
Global Student Outreach
Program established.

2010

Consortium for Translational
Orthodontic Research (CTOR)
established.

2010

Dr. Timothy Bromage, professor of basic
science and craniofacial biology, receives
the Max Planck Research Award.



A recent White Coat Ceremony for dental hygiene students.

program. Because it is an integral part of NYUCD, the dental hygiene program enables students to work collaboratively with second-, third-, and fourth-year DDS students and to rotate among the specialties.

“From the student perspective, the academic perspective, and the perspective of delivery of care, the dental hygiene program is a major contributor to NYUCD,” says Dr. Westphal Theile.

Today, the dental hygiene faculty consists of approximately 70 full-time, part-time, clinical, and adjunct faculty members, 50 percent of whom graduated from the program. “It’s all about a love of education and a commitment to a profession,” says Dr. Westphal Theile. “The faculty and administrators are committed to the students and to the university and especially to the profession of dental hygiene as a key component of the healthcare team.”

This commitment is exemplified by Professor Lorilei D. Kirby, a 1994 graduate of the Dental Hygiene Program, who also earned a BS in dental hygiene from NYUCD. “I love the college, I love being here, and this is what I want to continue to be a part of,” says Professor Kirby, a clinical assistant professor of dental hygiene. “Joining the Dental Hygiene Program really opened up a lot of opportunities for me that I would not otherwise have had. I’m so happy to have been, and still be, a part of it.”

While the fundamentals of the NYUCD Dental Hygiene Program—its emphasis on academic excellence, health promotion, disease prevention and research, community service, and comprehensive patient care—have remained constant, faculty are continually adapting the program’s curriculum to meet the ever-evolving role of dental hygienists in today’s world.

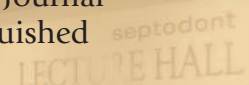
2012

NYU Oral Cancer Center established.



2013

The online-only, open-access Journal of the Academy of Distinguished Educators (JADE) debuts.



2012

NYU Center for Skeletal and Craniofacial Biology established.

2013

Septodont Hall is dedicated.

According to a report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 49 million people currently live in areas of the U.S. with limited access to dentists. That number has nearly tripled over the past 25 years, leading to curriculum change to advance the scope and practice of dental hygiene in order to help meet this need.

“The curriculum changes because you’re working with people from all walks of life—from pediatrics to elder care—in a lot of different settings. We’ve had to add more information about cultural competence, the humanities, and social justice, and the scope of our practice has had to expand so that students have the skill sets to perform local anesthesia, digital radiography testing, and more,” explains Dr. Westphal Theile.

Today, 37 states have policies that allow dental hygienists to practice in community-based settings and provide preventive oral health services without the presence or direct supervision of a dentist. This number has grown from just five states in 1995. “With 185,000 dental hygienists practicing today, and the U.S. Board of Labor and Statistics projecting a 36 percent growth in the profession by 2018,” says Dr. Westphal Theile, “this is the best time ever to become a licensed dental hygienist. In fact, for the past several years, *U.S. News and World Report* has ranked dental hygiene in the top 10 on their list of ‘Best Jobs.’”

The growing number of master’s degree programs in dental hygiene reflects the importance of advanced study to keep pace with the expanding scope and function of the profession. To date, dental schools in 16 states offer master’s degree programs in dental hygiene, and the establishment of an MS degree program in dental hygiene at NYUCD is a goal for Dean Westphal Theile, together with more technology in the classroom and online

courses for those who cannot attend traditional lectures.

“I see us continuing to graduate high-level hygienists who will be the future of the profession,” says Dean Westphal Theile. “The students come in filled with anticipation and, before we know it, they’re graduating, sad to be leaving their second home, but thrilled to be going out into clinical practice, public health careers, research, or healthcare management. Our alumni will always be a part of us; they serve as living proof of the excellence of NYU’s Dental Hygiene Program.”



2013

NYUCD hosts inaugural Plenary Council for faculty, students, and staff.

2015

New, collaborative, 170,000-square-foot dentistry, nursing, and bioengineering building opens at 433 First Avenue.

2014

Electronic Health Record (EHR) launched.