Dental Hygienists are valuable members of the healthcare team who work with dentists to provide oral health services to patients. They enjoy helping people, welcome challenging opportunities like performing detailed work and have an interest in life sciences.

Program Description

The Registered Dental Hygienist is a licensed health care professional dedicated to the maintenance of optimal oral health and the prevention of oral disease. These professional goals are accomplished through community oral health education, through delivery of preventive dental health services to individuals and through highly skilled patient treatment. Professional responsibilities vary by state or province but generally include the following clinical skills: perform thorough patient assessment, including review of health history; recording vital signs; head and neck inspection; oral cancer screening and dental charting; develop individualized oral self-care strategies; educate patients on the value of good oral health and its relationship to systemic health; perform various types of dental imaging; administer and monitor infiltration local anesthesia and nitrous oxide sedation; remove deposits and stains from the teeth; apply chemotherapeutic agents to treat or prevent dental diseases; and manage special needs and medically compromised patients.

Dental Hygiene offers exceptional career opportunities to men and women of all ages and backgrounds. Most graduates are employed in general or specialty dental practices. Alternate practice settings include hospital clinics, community health agencies, nursing homes, extended care facilities, public health agencies, schools, public and private agencies, health maintenance organizations and the military. Graduates may continue their education in baccalaureate or higher degree programs to expand their career options to teaching, research, management, professional consulting or the dental products industry.
Dental hygienists are licensed by the state or province in which they plan to practice. Generally, candidates for licensure must be graduates of an accredited dental hygiene program, must pass the National Board Dental Hygiene Examination taken near graduation and must pass a state or regional clinical examination. New York State uses the American Dental Hygiene Licensing Examination (ADEX) administered by the Commission on Dental Competency Assessment (CDCA). Many states now accept this examination for licensure. Candidates are encouraged to contact other jurisdictions in which they wish to be licensed to ensure that the ADEX licensure exam will fulfill the requirements for licensure in that jurisdiction. Applicants for licensure in New York must be of good moral character and will be subject to special review if criminal charges are pending or there has been a previous felony or misdemeanor conviction. Questions concerning these requirements may be directed to the NYS Education Department, Office of the Professionals, State Board of Dentistry.

Dental hygienists are valuable members of the dental health care team who work with dentists to provide oral health services to patients. They enjoy helping people, welcome challenging opportunities, perform detailed work and have an interest in life sciences. As a respected member of the dental team, dental hygienists can have a positive influence on the health of others, play a key role in the prevention of oral diseases which may impact systemic health, and enjoy a flexible, rewarding career.

Program Accreditation

The Dental Hygiene Program is accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation. The Commission is a specialized accrediting body recognized by the United States Department of Education. The Commission on Dental Accreditation can be contacted at (312) 440-4653 or at 211 East Chicago Avenue, Chicago, IL 60611. The Commission’s web address is: http://www.ada.org/100.aspx.

Program Mission and Goals

The mission of the Dental Hygiene Program is to provide a diverse learning community with a high quality, affordable curriculum which comprehensively prepares graduates to become competent, caring oral health care professionals. The Dental Hygiene faculty are dedicated to supporting an educational environment which facilitates open inquiry; provides a logical, integrated sequence of didactic, laboratory and clinical experiences for students to attain program competencies; recognizes the personal responsibilities students have in the learning process; fosters the development of ethical and professional behaviors; performs continuous curriculum assessment and planning to respond to scientific and technological changes in the dental profession. The goals of the program are to:

- prepare students with the scientific knowledge and clinical skills required of entry level dental hygienists;
- provide students with knowledge of the ethical and professional behaviors expected of licensed dental hygienists;
- establish a foundation for life-long learning through literature research, science/evidence-based decision making, critical thinking and self-assessment;
- develop a recognition of the dental health needs and the value of service to a culturally diverse community;
- prepare graduates for national and regional examinations leading to licensure; and
- maintain curriculum currency and effectiveness through continuous internal and periodic external assessment.

Program Competencies

The Dental Hygiene curriculum provides content in general education, biomedical sciences, dental sciences, and clinical skills. Graduation from the program requires attainment of the following competencies:

Professional Integrity

The Dental Hygiene graduate must be competent in applying the American Dental Hygienists’ Association Code of Ethics and practice with personal and professional integrity in accordance with the state dental practice act. Specifically, the Dental Hygiene graduate must:

- Uphold ethical and legal behaviors with all patients, colleagues and other professionals;
- Exhibit cultural awareness and sensitivity to patient’s goals, values, beliefs, and preferences in healthcare choices while promoting optimal oral care and general health during patient treatment.

Assessment

The Dental Hygiene graduate must apply medico-legal principles to the systematic collection, analysis and accurate recording of general, personal and oral health status of patients. Specifically, the Dental Hygiene graduate must:

- Recognize medical conditions that necessitate special considerations prior to or during treatment;
- Identify the patient at risk for a medical emergency and be prepared to manage the emergency should it occur during the appointment;
- Perform an extra-oral and intra-oral examination of hard and soft tissues, distinguish abnormal from normal findings, and accurately record the clinical observations;
- Identify the need for dental images, obtain images of diagnostic quality and interpret the findings;
- Evaluate the health history and personal and cultural behaviors to identify risk factors that require intervention to prevent disease; and
- Determine the need for referral to the appropriate health care provider.

Planning

The Dental Hygiene graduate must establish a planned sequence of patient care based on the dental hygiene diagnosis by identifying oral conditions, potential problems, etiologic and risk factors, and available treatment modalities, using evidence-based decision making and critical thinking skills. Specifically, the Dental Hygiene graduate must:

- Analyze and interpret the assessment data to formulate a dental hygiene diagnosis;
- Determine priorities and establish oral health goals with the patient/family and/or guardian as active participants;
- Communicate the plan for dental hygiene services to the dentist or appropriate interdisciplinary health team members; and
- Obtain the patient’s/client’s informed consent based on a thorough case presentation.
Self-Care Instruction

The Dental Hygiene graduate must provide planned educational services using appropriate interpersonal communication skills and educational strategies to achieve oral health goals. Specifically, the Dental Hygiene graduate must:

- Identify the health needs of patients and assist them in the development of individualized self-care regimens; and
- Encourage patients to assume responsibility for their health and promote adherence to self-care regimens.

Implementation

The Dental Hygiene graduate must provide treatment that includes preventive and therapeutic procedures to promote and maintain oral health. Specifically, the Dental Hygiene graduate must:

- Adhere to state and local policies and procedures for maintaining safety in the dental setting;
- Provide an oral environment for patients conducive to health by applying basic and advanced principles of dental hygiene standards of care without causing trauma to hard or soft tissues;
- Control pain and anxiety during treatment through the use of clinical techniques and behavioral management strategies; and
- Select and administer chemotherapeutic agents for the treatment or prevention of dental diseases and provide pre-and post-treatment instructions.

Evaluation

The Dental Hygiene graduate must evaluate the effectiveness of planned clinical and educational services and modify them as necessary. Specifically, the Dental Hygiene graduate must:

- Evaluate the clinical outcomes of dental hygiene treatment interventions using dental health indices, instruments and examination techniques, and determine the appropriate re-care schedules for patients; and
- Determine the patient’s satisfaction level with the dental hygiene care received and the oral health status achieved.

Community Involvement

The Dental Hygiene graduate must initiate and assume responsibility for health promotion and disease prevention for diverse populations. Specifically, the Dental Hygiene graduate must:

- Promote oral health and wellness strategies within the community;
- Assess, plan, implement and evaluate community-based oral health programs; and
- Provide community educational services and refer clients to appropriate resources in the health care system.

Information Management and Critical Thinking

The Dental Hygiene graduate must acquire and synthesize information in a critical, scientific, and effective manner. Specifically, the Dental Hygiene graduate must:

- Evaluate the scientific literature and dental product or therapeutic claims and use information technology to assist in developing evidence-based decisions regarding patient care;
- Be informed of current issues that impact the profession and clinical practice;
- Evaluate comprehensive patient care and management by the use of reflection; and
- Self-assess for the development of critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Characteristics of Successful Dental Hygiene Students

Applicants to the Dental Hygiene Program should have a well-rounded academic background with strong preparation in science courses. The two-year program is a rigorous and challenging schedule of academic and clinical courses which requires a full-time commitment. In addition to time spent in lectures, labs and clinics each week, students must devote considerable out-of-class time to study, completion of assignments and preparation for various small group projects. Successful Dental Hygiene students demonstrate the following personal characteristics:

- Excellent written and oral communication skills;
- Disciplined, highly motivated and well organized;
- Strong study habits and test taking skills;
- Above average manual dexterity;
- Mature behavior;
- Able to adhere to ethical standards of conduct;
- Ability to accept constructive criticism;
- Ability to work independently or in small groups;
- Ability to think critically; and
- Good stress coping skills.

Special Considerations for Potential Dental Hygiene Students

The Dental Hygiene curriculum is a rigorous, time intensive learning experience which requires the student to simultaneously acquire a broad base of scientific knowledge; develop the technical and manual skills needed to perform detailed clinical procedures; and acquire the personal qualities which define and are expected of a licensed health care professional. The following considerations are provided so that individuals interested in the study of Dental Hygiene may reasonably assess their career choice and ability to succeed in the program.

Practical Considerations

- Students must possess effective written and verbal skills in English to perform accurate communications with patients, faculty and other healthcare providers; prepare clear clinical record documentation; follow detailed directions and instruction; participate in group discussions; and give presentations to community groups.
- Students must have visual, auditory and tactile ability to accurately assess and safely treat patients; detect variations in color, shape, texture and consistency of oral soft tissues and skin; recognize shades of gray in order to interpret radiographs; monitor and record vital signs such as pulse and blood pressure; detect hard deposits on teeth and defects in tooth structure; and identify small instruments and markings.
- Students must possess good hand/eye coordination and manual dexterity; have full use of both hands, wrists and arms; have the strength and stamina to perform fine, detailed and delicate instrumentation in the confined space of the mouth; to work for hours in a seated position while performing repetitive hand, arm and upper body movements; and operate foot controlled instruments.
• Students must demonstrate mature behavior and respect for others; must have integrity and honesty; demonstrate sensitivity, empathy and compassion; maintain confidentiality; adhere to ethical, regulatory and professional standards of behavior; accept constructive criticism and modify behavior accordingly; dependably perform responsibilities on time without supervision; work independently on assignments or cooperatively in small groups; and demonstrate cultural sensitivity.

• Students must think critically and problem solve; synthesize objective and subjective data; set priorities; be flexible and adapt to changes; logically organize patient treatment plans based on the collection of assessment data and the needs/desires of the patient; exercise sound judgment; think and respond appropriately in crisis situations; understand three dimensional and spatial relationships; and have basic computer literacy.

**Personal Considerations**

• The Dental Hygiene curriculum includes lectures, laboratories, clinical experiences and community service activities which require a significant time commitment.

• Depending on courses taken and semester, the schedule in the clinical program includes 23 to 33 hours per week on campus.

• Out of class assignments, study time, preparation for examinations, working on group projects, library research, and practicing instrumentation skills will require additional hours of work.

• Clinical practice time requires nine (9) to twelve (12) hours per week and includes one or two evening clinics per week beginning in the second semester.

**Health Considerations**

• Dental Hygiene students require good physical and emotional health.

• Good stress coping skills are essential in a demanding health profession program.

• The patient care environment has the potential for exposure to blood borne pathogens and infectious diseases. Students receive detailed instruction on infection control protocols specific to the dental field and must comply with all regulatory requirements and department policies.

• Individuals accepted to the program must submit a physician completed SUNY Allied Health Form in order to participate in clinical courses. This is in addition to the proof of immunizations required of all students.

• Hepatitis B immunization (or a signed declination) is required.

• An annual influenza vaccination is strongly recommended.

**Legal Considerations**

• Applicants for Dental Hygiene licensure in New York must be of good moral character.

• Students in the program may be subjected to drug testing and criminal background checks at their own expense.

• A felony conviction may prevent a student from completing degree requirements.

• Pending criminal charges or conviction of a misdemeanor or felony are subject to special review by the New York State Board of Dentistry and may impact a licensure application.

• Applicants are responsible to contact the State Board directly to discuss legal considerations and/or citizenship or immigration status requirements before enrolling in a program leading to licensure.

**Special Admissions/Progression Requirements**

• The clinical Dental Hygiene course sequence begins in the fall semester only. Applicants are responsible for knowing admission requirements. Admission is competitive and is limited to 60 students. Completed on-line applications must be received in the North Campus Admissions Office by March 15th for consideration. Applications completed after the deadline, including courses taken after the deadline, will be evaluated on a space-available basis. Supporting transcripts (official copy) must be received in the North Campus Admission Office by May 31st; official transcripts received after May 31st will be reviewed on a space-available basis. Acceptance is contingent on satisfactory Accuplacer test results and satisfactory completion of any courses in progress. The on-line application may be found at http://www.ecc.edu/admissions/apply. The competitive, selective admission process has the goal of identifying highly qualified candidates who demonstrate the academic potential for successfully completing the Dental Hygiene Program. Potential students are strongly encouraged to spend time in a dental practice or clinic to observe the patient care environment and confirm interest in a dental hygiene career. To be considered for admission to clinical Dental Hygiene courses, applicants must demonstrate academic achievement. The following minimum requirements must be met for evaluation and ranking of an application for entry into the clinical course sequence:

• Reading and writing skills must be at the EN 110 level as determined by the Accuplacer test results or equivalent. Developmental courses must be completed prior to consideration for program entry.

• Mathematics skills must be at or above the MT 006 level (basic algebra) as determined by the Accuplacer test results or equivalent. Developmental courses must be completed prior to consideration for program entry.

• High school applicants: must have a cumulative grade point average of at least 90%, have an exam score of Regents Biology of at least 90%, and an exam score of Regents Chemistry of at least 90%.

• College applicants: must have a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.00 from all undergraduate colleges attended in the last five (5) years with grades of "C" or higher in general education courses required in the dental hygiene curriculum. College applicants not meeting the minimum cumulative GPA must establish an undergraduate cumulative GPA which includes at least some of the liberal arts and science courses required by the dental hygiene curriculum.

• Chemistry: a minimum grade of "C" in CH 144/145 (General Chemistry with Introductory Organic and Biochemistry) or higher level chemistry course completed within the past five (5) years. If the applicant receives grades below "C" or "W", the candidate may repeat the course only once. Applicants who do not successfully complete the Chemistry course will not be evaluated and ranked.

• Preferred and highly recommended: completion of general education courses required by the dental hygiene curriculum with high grades and cumulative grade point average above 3.00 (Microbiology with lab, Anatomy & Physiology I and II along with...
lons, and College Composition). Bioscience courses must be completed within the last five (5) years with no grades less than "C". Completion of these courses does not imply or guarantee admission to the Dental Hygiene program.

**Academic Experiences of the Most Recently Accepted Class**

- The majority of students had completed general education requirements including College Composition, Oral Communication, Psychology and Sociology.
- 100% of students had completed Anatomy & Physiology I and Anatomy & Physiology II.
- 100% of students had completed Microbiology.
- The average cumulative GPA was 3.533.
- 26% had a college degree.

**Application Review Procedure**

Completed applications with all supporting high school and college transcripts receive priority and are reviewed in a cascading process to calculate an academic profile score as follows:

- cumulative grade point average (must be at least 3.00 for college applicants; 90% for high school applicants)
- required science course grades (A&P I and II, Microbiology, Chemistry for college applicants; exam score of Regents Biology and Chemistry of at least 90% for high school applicants)
- required non-science course grades (EN 110 for college applicants)
- academic degrees earned with cumulative GPA at or above 3.00
- other degree credit science course with lab, higher level math course or college degree earned may be included as a tie breaker

If the number of qualified applicants exceeds the available entering class openings, points will be assigned to each of the academic criteria with required science courses receiving twice the weight of other courses. The most recent continuous academic record will receive primary consideration. Academic profile scores can be increased by completing general education requirements and earning high grades.

Final review of potentially qualified applications will be completed late in May/early June and accepted candidates will be notified in June. Exceptionally well qualified applicants may receive early acceptance. A limited number of applicants may receive alternate status. Applicants not admitted for the Fall semester must reapply for the next application period and compete with a new pool of applicants. The program does not offer a waiting list. When re-applying for the following application cycle, students are responsible to verify that biosciences courses are not expired. Expired biosciences course will not be considered for an evaluation and ranking of an application. Applications received after the March 15 deadline will be considered only on a space available basis.

Applicants not accepted to the two-year Dental Hygiene course sequence may be offered admission to the General Studies (250/DH) option. This will provide the student an opportunity to establish a competitive academic credential and meet Dental Hygiene admission requirements through an individually developed schedule of pre-requisite and required liberal arts and science courses based on the applicant's academic history and Accuplacer test results. Dental Hygiene program advisers will provide academic advisement and tracking during required semester meetings. Admission to this preparatory track does not imply or guarantee admission to clinical courses.

Note: Meeting minimum entry requirements to clinical dental hygiene courses does not guarantee admission due to space limitations. Science courses taken more than five (5) years ago may not be accepted.

**Department Notes**

- Dental Hygiene courses are integrated and sequenced in a specific manner to enable students to attain program competencies. Candidates admitted to clinical courses must enroll in all courses required during each semester. All required courses must be passed each semester in order to advance to the following semester. Dental Hygiene courses must be taken in the prescribed sequence. General Education courses may be taken earlier than indicated but may not be taken later than the prescribed schedule. Note that Dental Hygiene courses are offered only once each year, not each semester.
- The SUNY Allied Health Report, completed by a physician, is required prior to the start of clinical experiences to assure that students are in good physical and mental health and capable of performing program requirements. Failure to submit the report to the Dental Hygiene Department by the start of classes will prevent progression in the program.
- Hepatitis B immunization is required or a signed declination. Annual influenza immunization is strongly recommended.
- Due to the nature of the clinical experiences in SUNY Erie's Dental Hygiene Program, students will be participating in a work environment that has potential for exposure to blood borne pathogens and infectious diseases. Program instruction includes training in infectious diseases, mechanisms of transmission and current infection control protocols required in clinical practice. During patient treatment experiences, students must wear prescribed uniforms, masks, gloves and protective eyewear. Students must strictly adhere to standard precautions and infection control procedures outlined by OSHA, the CDC and the department's Infection/Hazard Control manual to assure a safe working environment and to minimize the risk of infection due to contact with blood or saliva. Failure to follow standard precautions places everyone at risk and will result in academic penalty.
- Dental Hygiene students are expected to manifest exemplary ethical and professional behaviors and must adhere to the College Code of Conduct and American Dental Hygienists' Association (ADHA) Code of Ethics. Academic dishonesty or other unprofessional conduct is subject to review by elected students of the Dental Hygiene Professional Honor Council and faculty and may result in disciplinary action.
- Students may be excluded from clinical courses when in the judgment of the department and/or college they are unable to provide safe patient care or have demonstrated unprofessional behavior. Appropriate professional conduct is outlined in clinical manuals provided to students. Specific clinical attire is prescribed by the faculty. Jewelry (including piercings of the head, neck and mouth), rings and artificial fingernails are not permitted in the clinics in order to comply with infection control standards and assure professional decorum.
Textbooks, instruments, uniforms and supplies prescribed by faculty are required.

Malpractice insurance, accident insurance and membership in the Student American Dental Hygienists’ Association are required of students in clinics. Student health insurance is strongly recommended.

Attendance is required at all scheduled sessions to assure maximum learning opportunities and skill development.

Students must participate in clinical practice activities as clinicians and as patients.

Students must provide their own transportation to off-campus assignments.

Students are required to recruit patients for treatment at scheduled clinical practice sessions.

Special attention should be given to course pre-requisites during schedule planning. Students are responsible for knowing admission requirements and department policies and must meet with their Dental Hygiene academic advisers each semester.

"C-" is the minimum passing grade in all required courses in the Dental Hygiene curriculum. The grading system for Dental Hygiene is: A = 94-100; B = 87-93; C = 80-86. Class/lab/clinic attendance is required for maximum learning and practice opportunities. Unexcused absences may negatively affect final grades.

Withdrawal from or failure of a required course after admission to the Dental Hygiene curriculum results in program dismissal. Program re-entry may be considered on a space available basis by faculty who will evaluate the merits of a re-entry request and, if approved, will prescribe the appropriate courses/requirements for re-entry. Program re-entry is not permitted after a second attempt.

To assure current and adequate preparation for licensure examinations at graduation, transfer credit for biomedical sciences may only be granted for courses taken within the past five (5) years. To assure proper preparation for clinical practice and licensure examinations, transfer credits for dental courses are not available.

CURRICULUM

The Dental Hygiene Program faculty conducts continuous curriculum review and planning to maintain program currency and effectiveness. Please contact the department to receive the most current information.

Total Degree Credits: 69.0

First Year, Fall Semester

DH 100  Oral Health Services I (5 cr)
DH 110  Head, Neck and Oral Anatomy (3 cr)
DH 120  Dental Radiography I (1 cr)
DH 121  Dental Radiography Laboratory I (1 cr)
BI 150  Anatomy and Physiology I (3 cr)
BI 151  Laboratory for BI 150 (1 cr)
EN 110  College Composition (3 cr)
PS 100  General Psychology (3 cr) *

* HU 100 Human Interaction (3 cr) may be substituted for PS 100

First Year, Spring Semester

DH 150  Oral Health Services II (4 cr)
DH 170  Dental Nutrition (2 cr)
DH 180  Dental Radiography II (1 cr)
DH 181  Dental Radiography Laboratory II (1 cr)
DH 190  Periodontology (2 cr)
BI 152  Anatomy and Physiology II (3 cr)
BI 153  Laboratory for BI 152 (1 cr)
BI 230  Microbiology (3 cr)
BI 231  Lab for BI 230 (1 cr)
EG 022  Medical Emergencies in the Dental Office (1 cr) *

*EG 009 Basic Emergency Health Care (3 cr) may be substituted for EG 022.

Summer Session I

DH 175  Oral Health Services III (3 cr)

Second Year, Fall Semester

DH 200  Oral Health Services IV (6 cr)
DH 220  Dental Materials (2 cr)
DH 221  Dental Materials Lab (1 cr)
DH 230  Pathology (3 cr)
SO 100 Introduction to Sociology (3 cr)

Second Year, Spring Semester

DH 250  Oral Health Services V (5 cr)
DH 260  Community Dental Health (2 cr)
DH 270  Pharmacology (2 cr)
EN 114  Public Speaking (3 cr) *

* CA 205 Interpersonal Communication (3 cr) may be substituted for EN 114

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