

Career Profile



VIDEO COVERAGE
Ginnie Thorburn speaks at
<http://www.chroniclet.com/Nie>

A weekly series devoted to providing information on career exploration

Do You Like

- Providing personal assistance, medical attention, emotional support, or other personal care to others such as coworkers, customers, or patients?
- Being careful about detail and thorough in completing work tasks?
- Performing routine maintenance on equipment and determining when and what kind of maintenance is needed?
- Understanding the implications of new information for both current and future problem-solving and decision-making?
- Being reliable, responsible, and dependable, and fulfilling obligations?
- Encouraging and building mutual trust, respect, and cooperation among team members?

Then This Could Be The Career For You!

The Type of Work

- Prepare patient, sterilize and disinfect instruments, set up instrument trays, prepare materials, and assist dentist during dental procedures.
- Expose dental diagnostic x-rays.
- Take and record medical and dental histories and vital signs of patients.
- Provide postoperative instructions prescribed by dentist.
- Assist dentist in management of medical and dental emergencies.
- Instruct patients in oral hygiene and plaque control programs.
- Make preliminary impressions for study casts and occlusal registrations for mounting study casts.
- Clean and polish removable appliances.



Pathways to Success

Many assistants learn their skills on the job, although an increasing number are trained in dental-assisting programs offered by community and junior colleges, trade schools, technical institutes, or the Armed Forces. For those wishing to pursue further education, the Commission on Dental Accreditation within the American Dental Association (ADA) approved 269 dental-assisting training programs in 2006. Programs include classroom, laboratory, and preclinical instruction in dental-assisting skills and related theory. In addition, students gain practical experience in dental schools, clinics, or dental offices. Most programs take 1 year or less to complete and lead to a certificate or diploma. Two-year programs offered in community and junior colleges lead to an associate degree. All programs require a high school diploma or its equivalent, and some require science or computer-related courses for admission. A number of private schools offer 4- to 6-month courses in dental assisting, but the Commission on Dental Accreditation does not accredit these programs. A large number of dental assistants learn through on-the-job training. In these situations, the employing dentist or other dental assistants in the dental office teach the new assistant dental terminology, the names of the instruments, how to perform daily duties, how to interact with patients, and other things necessary to help keep the dental office running smoothly. While some things can be picked up easily, it may be a few months before new dental assistants are completely knowledgeable about their duties and comfortable doing all of their tasks without assistance.

What Employers Look For

- Individuals who possess knowledge of:**
- Information and techniques needed to diagnose and treat human injuries, diseases, and deformities. This includes symptoms, treatment alternatives, drug properties and interactions, and preventive health-care measures.
 - Principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.
 - Administrative and clerical procedures and systems such as word processing, managing files and records, stenography and transcription, designing forms, and other office procedures and terminology.
 - Chemical composition, structure, and properties of substances and of the chemical processes and transformations that they undergo. This includes uses of chemicals and their interactions, danger signs, production techniques, and disposal methods.

Job Outlook

Dental assistants held about 280,000 jobs in 2006. Almost all jobs for dental assistants were in offices of dentists. A small number of jobs were in the Federal, State, and local governments or in offices of physicians. About 35 percent of dental assistants worked part time, sometimes in more than one dental office. Employment is expected to grow 29 percent from 2006 to 2016, which is much faster than the average for all occupations. In fact, dental assistants are expected to be among the fastest growing occupations over the 2006-16 projection period. Population growth, greater retention of natural teeth by middle-aged and older people, and an increased focus on preventative dental care for younger generations will fuel demand for dental services. Older dentists, who have been less likely to employ assistants or have employed fewer, are leaving the occupation and will be replaced by recent graduates, who are more likely to use one or more assistants. In addition, as dentists' workloads increase, they are expected to hire more assistants to perform routine tasks, so that they may devote their own time to more complex procedures.

Earnings Potential

Location	Year	Pay Period	Low	Median	High
United States	2006	Yearly	\$20,500	\$30,200	\$43,000
		Hourly	\$15.40	\$23.20	\$33.10
Ohio	2006	Yearly	\$20,900	\$29,400	\$38,000
		Hourly	\$16.10	\$22.60	\$29.20
Cleveland Elyria-Mentor, OH MSA	2006	Yearly	\$20,100	\$28,200	\$36,400
		Hourly	\$15.50	\$21.70	\$28.00

Source: Occupational Information Network, O*Net Online, <http://online.onetcenter.org>

Dental Assistant

DEFINITION: Assist dentist, set up patient and equipment, and keep records.

NAME: Ginnie Thorburn
COMPANY: Scott Arndt DDS, N. Ridgeville

- Q. When you were a young child, what did you want to be when you grew up?**
A. I always knew that I wanted to be in the health care field. When I was in high school back in the 70's, I decided that I wanted to be a dental assistant because I thought the job looked fun, and I loved the cute uniforms that the assistants wore that worked for my dentist.
- Q. How did you become interested in your particular field?**
A. Just by chance, I was in my dentist's office for a routine appointment (Dr. Ron Arndt, Dr. Scott Arndt's brother, back in 1976) and he asked me if I knew of anyone looking for a dental assisting job. I just happened to know someone... ME! I loved the office and dreamed of working there. I actually had my initial interview right there in the chair.
- Q. Who or what influenced your decision the most and why?**
A. My dentist, Ron Arndt, who later became my boss, was very influential in directing my path. He was the kind of boss who believed in you even when you didn't believe in yourself. He encouraged his staff to further their education, to reach higher potential. He was the one who sent me to Case Western Reserve University for the Expanded Functions Program.
- Q. What is your educational background?**
A. I graduated from North Ridgeville High School in 1975. After that, I worked a couple of meager jobs until I got the job with Dr. Arndt. Initially I was trained right on the job. A lot of dentists like to do that to teach you 'their' way. After working as a chairside assistant for a couple of years, I went on to become a Certified Dental Assistant by sitting for a difficult exam, and then entered the Expanded Functions Dental Assistant program at CWRU in 1978. The program lasted for 9 months and involved taking a State Board test to become certified in Expanded Functions. An Expanded Functions Auxiliary can do many procedures such as filling teeth and fabricating temporary crowns; the job offers a lot of variety.
- Q. What was the most critical class or training you took and why?**
A. The training to become an Expanded Functions involved intense training at the university -- learning all of the techniques that I now use daily. I also worked on patients at different remote sites in the Cleveland area to get familiar with my new skills. That was very challenging. One of the sites was the dental clinic at Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital.
- Q. What skills do you think are needed to be successful in this field?**
A. If you want to be an Expanded Functions Dental Assistant you have to go through formal training at an accredited university. To be a chairside assistant you can still get hired in some offices with no formal training and get trained on the job. It helps, though, to go through a dental assisting program to help learn the basics. I feel that anyone considering a position in dental assisting has to have a strong desire to work closely with people, be compassionate, bright and cheerful, energetic, well-kept and willing to learn a LOT.

Local Education Websites

Lorain County JVS
High School & Adult Career Center Programs
www.lcjvs.com
www.lcjvs.com/adult

Lorain County Community College
www.lorainccc.edu

Sources: Occupational Information Network, O*Net Online, <http://online.onetcenter.org>; ** U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook, <http://stats.bls.gov/oco>



Next Week: Customer Service Representative