

The Anatomy of a Table Clinic

Table clinics are the benchmark of dental hygiene programs across the country and through the ages. Today's dental hygiene student still researches and presents table clinics as generations of hygienists have done before them. Table clinic presentations and competitions are often the most popular feature of state and national meetings, attracting students and dental hygienists of all experience levels.

What do students think about table clinics? Do they enjoy presenting them as much as practitioners enjoy viewing them? How do you get started on what can often be an overwhelming assignment?

As a student advisor, I thought I would go to the source and ask students who have recently gone through the "table clinic experience" at the state and national level.

Getting Started

Finding a topic is a pivotal point in the table clinic process. Students have discovered their topics through class and continuing education lectures, articles in dental hygiene magazines and journals and even through chance conversations with other dental hygienists and friends. Since most table clinics are presented in groups of two to three students, it is a good idea to brainstorm as a group to discuss potential areas of interest. The most important aspect of finding a topic though, is that the subject matter be of interest to the presenters. It is hard to generate enthusiasm in your presentation if the topic is not relevant to you or your group.

"Our first subject didn't work out. We frantically started looking for a new topic. We heard over the radio about the benefits of coconut water and decided to take a deeper look,"

Jana Nation of Loma Linda University

Developing the Topic

Once a topic has been found, the next step is to prepare for the type of table clinic your group will present. Will the table clinic be informational, reviewing current information on a given subject, or original research? If you plan on doing original research involving human subjects or surveys, your project will need to have an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, assuring that your project protects the rights and welfare of your subjects. Schools that do not have an IRB committee on campus may fulfill the requirement by completing the training available on the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative web site at www.citiprogram.org.



2010 Table Clinic and Research Poster Session at ADHA Center for Lifelong Learning in Las Vegas, NV

Some presentation venues, such as ADHA, may require that original research be presented in a poster format. It is important to be aware of the various presentation requirements as you plan your project.

- Table clinic presentation requirements and deadlines:
- CDHA www.cdha.org/sadha/index.html
- ADHA www.adha.org/students/awards.htm

Preparing the Table Clinic

The actual process of preparing for the table clinic proved to be the most challenging task for most of the students interviewed. On the average, most presenters spent about five months gathering information, producing and preparing the presentation. While the process varied depending on the type of clinic being prepared, all of the students stated that it is imperative to stay focused on the task at hand.

Helpful hints include:

- Make an overview and outline of the project
- Divide up the responsibilities within the group
- Set weekly goals for the group
- Research the topic thoroughly
- Use the appropriate Internet search engine for your topic (PubMed for science and evidence-based information)
- Compile and edit the information to be presented
- Decide on an interesting way to present the information
- Know the material
- Memorize the presentation
- Practice the presentation in front of family, friends and faculty
- Videotape the presentation and critique it

StudentConnection

- Be ready to answer questions from the audience
- Attend other table clinic presentations

“To prepare, Kristen and I met or worked online at least once a week to talk about our topic, abstract and how we would carry out our presentation. We always worked separately then came to the table to share our ideas,“

Risa Regalado, University of Southern California

Faculty Support

The students interviewed stated that the support they received from the dental hygiene faculty was invaluable. Instructors served as mentors and advisors for every step of the table clinic process. Heartfelt, honest feedback and guidance was identified as the most critical role of the faculty mentor. Faculty members also assisted students by giving guidance in topic selection and setting dead-lines. Above all, assisting students prepare their oral presentations, was considered the most valued aspect of faculty mentorship.

“Our faculty was extremely helpful every step of the way. They guided those struggling to pick a topic, they had ideas for information to include and they proofread our board and speeches”

Katie Carter, Cerritos College

Table Clinic Competitions

Students who presented their table clinics at competitions such as the CDHA Spring Scientific Session and at the ADHA Center for Life Long Learning felt that although the evaluation process was intense, it was fair. The scoring criterion was clearly stated well in advance of the competition and the presenters understood what was expected of them. The students interviewed felt that the judges asked thoughtful and insightful questions and that really allowed them to share their depth of knowledge.

Just “do it!”

Overall, the students felt that the table clinic experience was an important part of their dental hygiene education and they would highly recommend it to others. While the presentation itself pushed many students outside of their comfort zones, actually completing the presentation and getting constructive feedback made the whole experience invaluable. Students reported that they gained tremendous self-confidence by making a public presentation to peers and professionals. They also felt that they were able to contribute to the profession by sharing the valuable information that they had learned by researching their particular subject area.

“I learned that I could memorize a speech and present it to a room full of people. Not only did I become an expert on my topic, I felt that I learned a lot about myself as well.”

Melissa Shuck, Cerritos College

Table clinics are a great experience and one that students continue to find valuable. Students say that finding a topic of interest that you

are passionate about is key to a great table clinic. Presenting a table clinic is definitely a challenge that is worth the effort!

“Do it! You really get a chance to meet some awesome people from different schools and also it gives you a chance to talk about something that you are passionate about”

Jana Nation, Loma Linda University

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2010 CDHA Table Clinic Competition Award Winners

Informational

1st Place: *“Taking a Bite Out of Periodontal Disease: How Occlusal Trauma Effects Periodontal Disease”*
Nicole Monroe and Tiffanie Wedell; Cerritos College

2nd Place: *“Look Ma, No Cavities”*
Janet Star Lor and Cynthia Villagaomez; Cerritos College

3rd Place: *“Autoimmune Hepatitis, Who Knew?”*
Abbra Sanders, Jennifer Meloni, Vanessa Arriloa and La Rhonda McCracken; Cypress College

Research

1st Place: *“Uptake of Fluoride Foam - A Laboratory Study of Human Enamel”*
Stacy Stroup and Lauren Stewart; Loma Linda University

2nd Place: *“pH Comparison of Coconut Water and Carbohydrate Electrolyte Sport Drinks”*
Jane Kim and Jana Nation, Loma Linda University

3rd Place: *“Can You Hear Me Now?”*
Andrea Ponce and Amber Wood; Cerritos College