

## Aspen Dental Opens In Walgreens

The big news in dentistry is the announcement of Aspen Dental-branded Offices opening in 2 Walgreens located in Florida. This collaboration brings together a leader in understanding the intersection of retail and health care and a brand that has made dental care affordable for more than 20 years.

The announcement of the Aspen/Walgreens partnership will provide the experts opportunity to repeat the rhetoric; solo dental practitioners are the lone wolf, a dying breed. After all, since physician practices have followed this trend, surely dentistry will too. In the words of Mark Twain, "The news of my death has been greatly exaggerated!"

I believe there is an exciting future for dentists and dentistry. Yes, the future will look different, but a dentist who continuously creates value for the patient will always be welcome in the market.

The ADA research shows that dental care utilization patterns are changing dramatically in the United States. Over the past decade, important trends were identified.

One, the pattern of dental care utilization for adults differed markedly compared to children. The percent of adults with a dental visit in the last 12 months decreased from a peak of 41 percent in 2003 to 37 percent in 2010. For children, this increased from 42 percent in 2000 to 46 percent in 2003 and roughly held steady through 2010.

Two, trends were different based on income. Utilization declined for middle-income adults from 38 percent in 2003 to 34 percent in 2010, and for higher income adults from 54 percent in 2003 to 51 percent in 2010.

The main driver of the decline in utilization among adults and the increase in utilization among children is shifting dental benefits. Basically, more and more children are covered by some form of dental benefits (mainly Medicaid), while more and more adults are finding themselves uninsured for dental care. The Affordable Care Act, is expanding dental benefits for children; pediatric dental benefits are one of 10 essential health benefits mandated by the law.

The ADA's analysis estimates that up to 8.7 million children will gain extensive dental benefits because of health reform. About one-third of these children will gain Medicaid coverage, and two-thirds will receive private dental coverage. For adults, however, nothing in the Act will reverse the current decline in dental benefits coverage and utilization.

The third trend is our aging population. Dental care use among those 65 and older is holding steady. On a per-patient basis, this age group spends the most on dental care—\$796 in 2010, a large portion of it out of pocket. Given that there will be a lot more people in this age group as the U.S. population ages, seniors are going to become an important driver of the dental care economy. Barriers for this group include: cost, no teeth, fear, inconvenient location or time, trouble finding a dentist, as well as no perceived need.

### Optimize Your Practice

Optimizing your practice is the first step to maximizing value. Whether one is setting practice goals for clinical results, financial results, or patient satisfaction, you must have a plan of action. Actionable plans must be developed from data which requires your investment of time and knowing what data is important. Goals without objective feedback are rarely attained and usually fall off the radar.

Our Benchmarking services are designed to illuminate the blind spots and confirm best practices, provide a competitive edge, and implement necessary actions for success.

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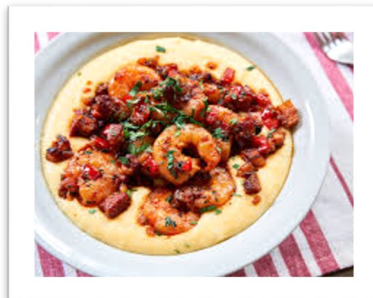
## Shrimp and Grits—Down South

### For the grits:

- 8 cups chicken broth
- 1 stick butter
- 3 cups ground speckled yellow grits
- 3/4 cup heavy whipping cream
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- 6 dashes cayenne pepper

### For the shrimp and sausage:

- 2 pounds smoked sausage, sliced into 1/4-inch pieces
- 3 pounds medium shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1 (15-ounce) can yellow corn, drained
- 1 (12-ounce) package bacon, cooked and crumbled (save drippings)
- 1/2 cup bourbon
- 6 dashes Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1 teaspoon chopped parsley, plus additional for garnish
- Lemon wedges, for garnish
- Tabasco sauce



For the grits: In a large pot, bring broth to boil. Add butter. Pour grits into broth slowly and let cook on medium heat, stirring often, for about 10 minutes. Stir in cream, salt, 1 teaspoon garlic salt and cayenne; cook on low heat until grits are thick and bubbly, about 20 minutes total. If grits thicken too much, add some extra broth.

For the shrimp and sausage: Saute sausage, shrimp and corn in 2 heaping tablespoons of bacon drippings, bourbon and Worcestershire sauce until shrimp are a nice pink. Add 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt and parsley.

To serve: Place serving of grits on plate and spoon sausage and shrimp mixture over grits. Sprinkle with crumbled bacon. Garnish with lemon wedge and parsley. Serve hot with Tabasco on the side as an option.

## Practice Growth—Social Media Presence

Enhancing your brand may sound cliché, but a properly executed social media campaign not only provides brand recognition, it can lead to new patients and community awareness. Moreover, this affect is multiplied when you have patients (fans) sharing and liking your social media messaging.

Strengthening your online presence is a big deal without a big price tag. Actually, it is possible to gain more exposure via this public forum than any other form of advertising. If you can provide consistent and useful messaging, patients will interact, thus improving and promoting awareness of your practice.

Improving SEO (search engine optimization) is often overlooked as a critical element in brand awareness and recognition. Think of this as creating your microcosm; reaching far enough to find the right kind of viewer. Reviewing your sources of online traffic to your website should not be ignored; how patients find you, where did they come from, and how long they visited your site. To know if your social media campaign is successful, simply measure the results of traffic from your social media channels to your website.

The traffic driven by your social media presence to your website is often from prospective patients who have researched you and are now interested in your practice and services, which generally leads to potential patients. So,

## The Morning Huddle

### *Tips for Success*

1. Track month-to-date goals vs. actual numbers for doctor, hygiene, and collections.
2. Track yesterday's goals vs. yesterday's actual numbers for doctor, hygiene, and collections.
3. Work out today's goal vs. projected for doctor, hygiene, and collections.
4. Determine how many major procedures are needed for the next five days. How many major procedures need to be added to stay on target/goal?
5. Determine if there are any openings in the dentist's schedule. Identify patients in the schedule with potential treatment that could be added to the schedule as needed. Other solutions?
6. Identify patients that need X-rays per treatment guidelines.
7. Note what emergency time is available today.
8. Go over financial information on the day's patients. Identify financial arrangements needed, etc.
9. New patients: Review info from telephone contact form.
10. Status and follow-up on changes from yesterday's schedule. Bring yesterday's schedule to discuss to-do's and potential issues or problems, i.e., lab cases not in, lack of inventory, etc.

## Aspen/Walgreens—continued...

Looking at practice ownership, 80% of dentists in private practice are owners, according to the data. This is considerably higher than the rate among physicians which is now less than half. But the more interesting aspect is the trends over time. Practice ownership rates in dentistry are declining slowly and steadily. They are declining for almost every age group with the exception being female dentists. These data indicate that the decline in practice ownership rates in dentistry is not being driven solely by the “de-aging” and “feminization” of the dentist workforce. Older male dentists are also less likely to own a practice. Among physicians, the decline in practice ownership is much more pronounced from 61% to 47%. The greatest changes for dentistry are in the younger age group (<35) along with the 35 to 44 age group.

Dentists hold the belief that practice ownership is highly coveted. In fact, the ability to own their practices is one of the top 3 factors attracting dentists to dentistry, and most dental school graduates intend to work in private practice. All else being equal, owner dentists earn more, although overall career satisfaction differences are not clear-cut.

Whatever one’s perspective on the trend of declining ownership, it is important to understand this will continue, or so the experts say. Exactly when (and even if) most dentists will eventually be employed is up for debate. For example, if the trend continues, the 50% threshold will be reached in 2090, the ADA estimates. This is quite a prediction made with only a few data points. The trend that more and more dentists will be employed is not up for debate. Experts with different views on this issue agree that the trend will continue.

Let’s dig deeper here with some additional data from the ADA Health Policy Institute, and you can decide for yourself how big this tsunami is! Wait times for dental appointments have been increasing since 2012 and are at 7 days for a new patient and 5.4 for an existing patient. Regarding Busyness, 37% of dentist said patient volume went up, 43% stayed the same and only 21% declined.

Dentist’s net income is on the rise for the past three years, but not at pre-Great Recession Levels, interestingly specialists net income is going down. Regarding ownership: 8.3% of dentists were affiliated with a DSO in 2018 vs 7.4% in 2016, a 0.9% difference, hardly a seismic shift. The differences are even less when looking at Dental Offices VS Dentists with only 2.8% of dental offices participating in DSO’s. 91.6% of dentists were non-DSO affiliated, with 97.2% of practices non-DSO affiliated.

This is timely information considering the Aspen Dental/Walgreens announcement. Practice management is one of the areas today’s new graduates feel least prepared for, and the dental care environment is about to get a lot more complex. There will be more competition for patients, and increased pressure to do more with less if reimbursement continues to decline and demand for dental care remains sluggish. An emerging emphasis on quality and value will spur changes in the care delivery model.

In a nutshell, a lot more finance, data, marketing, and managerial expertise is going to be needed to run a successful dental practice. However, much of this can be outsourced with highly predictable results. The future of dentistry will surely change, but we are firmly positioned in the camp of supporting solo practitioners by develop models and actionable strategies that provide a competitive advantage and successful career. That’s all for now, but we will continue this discussion in our next edition.

## Practice Growth—continued...

advertising where potential patients spend their time becomes an important factor. After Google, your audience is most active on social media so focus on the most popular; Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and Snapchat. Each serves a different purpose in your microcosm. For example, Facebook not only allow users to review your practice online, it allows you to target demographics similar to your existing patient base, boosting posts and advertising your practice for a reasonable investment.

Twitter, perhaps less common among dental practices, is a perfect channel for opinion sharing, practice updates and patient testimonials. If you use Twitter, we recommend multiple posts each day and quick response to any direct messages.

LinkedIn is the most professional social medial channel for sharing between colleagues. Practices tend to use this platform to share among forums and each other.

Instagram and Snapchat are all about images and, dental marketing is all about the “image”. Photos of case studies (before/after) and specialty work will be right at home on these channels. Think about it, you show images of your work in the office. Why not show it to the world?

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Phillip Clark, Dental Advisory

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## Wine polyphenols

Evidence suggests that sipping wine may be good for your colon and heart, possibly because of the beverage's abundant and structurally diverse polyphenols. Now researchers report in ACS' Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry that wine polyphenols might also be good for your oral health. Can these chemical compounds really fend off bacteria that cause cavities and gum disease?

Traditionally, some health benefits of polyphenols have been attributed to the fact that these compounds are antioxidants, meaning they likely protect the body from harm caused by free radicals. However, recent work indicates polyphenols might also promote health by actively interacting with bacteria in the gut. That makes sense because plants and fruits produce polyphenols to ward off infection by harmful bacteria and other pathogens. M. Victoria Moreno-Arribas and colleagues wanted to know whether wine and grape polyphenols would also protect teeth and gums, and how this could work on a molecular level.

The researchers checked out the effect of two red wine polyphenols, as well as commercially available grape seed and red wine extracts, on bacteria that stick to teeth and gums and cause dental plaque, cavities and periodontal disease. Working with cells that model gum tissue, they found that the two wine polyphenols in isolation -- caffeic and p-coumaric acids -- were generally better than the total wine extracts at cutting back on the bacteria's ability to stick to the cells. When combined with the *Streptococcus dentisani*, which is believed to be an oral probiotic, the polyphenols were even better at fending off the pathogenic bacteria. The researchers also showed that metabolites formed when digestion of the polyphenols begins in the mouth might be responsible for some of these effects.

Source: Materials provided by American Chemical Society. Note: Content may be edited for style and length.

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