

WOMEN IN DENTISTRY

The following extracts are from an article in Canada's Health and Welfare, March 1969, by Miss Sharon B. Amer, Senior Dental Hygienist, Department of National Health and Welfare:

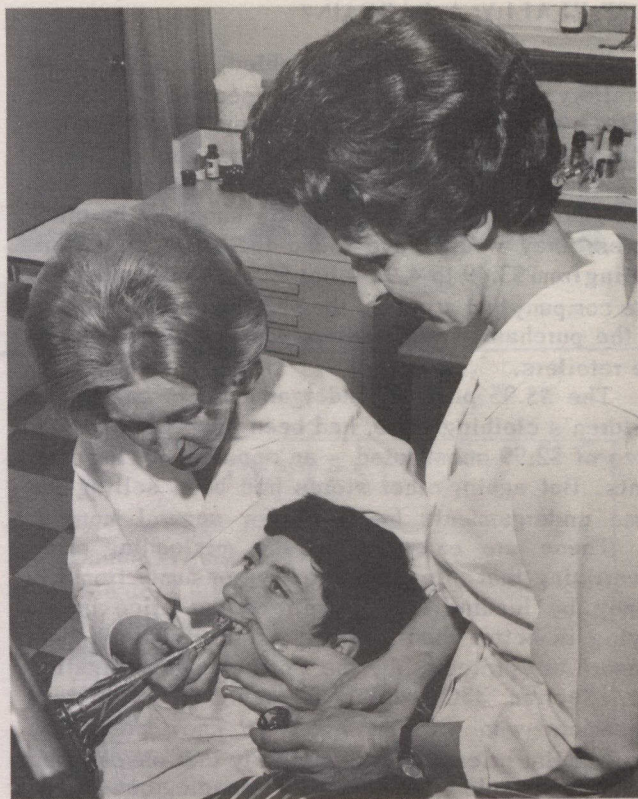
Although most Canadians would feel quite at ease if greeted by a female dental assistant or receptionist, they might be amazed if confronted by a female dentist. In Canada, only a few of the 6,000 plus dentists are female. The percentage has remained at less than 5 per cent over the last decade. Male predominance is not the rule in many Scandinavian and Eastern European countries, where women often outnumber men overwhelmingly in dentistry, as well as in medicine.

Dentistry as a health profession is particularly suited to the modern woman, owing in part, to the possibility of adjusting hours of practise to fit family responsibilities. Contrary to popular belief, the physical requirements of dental practise are well within the capacity of any healthy woman, and the profession is probably much less demanding than being a wife and mother. It has been demonstrated many times that a well-organized woman who also happens to be a dentist can readily adjust her life to accommodate both a flourishing dental practice and an active and happy family and social life.

DENTAL HYGIENIST

Another member of the Canadian dental health team who, owing to her rarity, often raises the eyebrows of patients, is the dental hygienist. Dental hygienists have been trained in Canada only since 1952, with schools at five universities across Canada offering a two-year post senior matriculation course. There are some 400 to 500 graduate hygienists licensed to practise. Up to now, this ancillary profession has remained a female occupation, although the Canadian Armed Forces have trained men for several years in the Dental Corps to perform similar functions. However, there is now considerable concern to liberalize the provincial laws and the course admission requirements, to enable men to pursue this occupation....

What does the future hold in store for Canadian women in dentistry? Although the outlook is excellent, the future situation will probably be very different from what it is today. First of all, we can reasonably expect to attract a much larger number of women into positions with a wider variety of functions and increased responsibility, at the same time maintaining or establishing a personal financial return competitive with that of other careers. The role of the dental "auxiliary" (a term chosen to denote dental hygienists, dental assistants, dental technicians and any other form of paradental personnel) is coming under increasing scrutiny by dentists and governments alike. As with medicine and its numerous ancillary personnel and its ever-increasing reliance on these individuals, in order to



Dr. G. Kravis (left), dental surgeon, and Mrs. A. Moisey, dental assistant, employees of Ottawa's Collegiate Institute Board.

effectively, efficiently and economically meet the demands of the public, the dental profession is finding it necessary to delegate to well prepared individuals more and more functions in order to meet its obligations to the community.

ROLE OF PROVINCES

The dental hygienist has been an example of this trend. What develops in the future will depend to a large extent on the recommendation of various federal and provincial expert committees now examining this subject and the programmes that the individual provincial governments establish. Several provinces are considering programmes to educate and employ dental auxiliaries with duties and responsibilities expanded in a variety of ways. All that can be said at present is that there is considerable excitement in the Canadian dental arena concerning the innovations being considered for the near future. One development that does seem very likely is an expansion of the training programmes for dental hygienists or other auxiliaries into the regional colleges that are being established in many parts of Canada. Dental assistants, who are usually trained by the dentist-employer because of a lack of training programmes, as well as dental technicians, will be able to find more formal courses in such institutions as high schools, vocational institutes or community colleges....