

Dental Conferences: Valuable 'Homecoming' Opportunity

Bob O'Donnell, DDS General Chair for Hinman 2020

Upon graduation from dental school, you and your classmates will head in many different directions. Some will return to their hometown to start or join a practice. Others will relocate to a city in which they've always wanted to live to begin their journey in dentistry. Some will choose private practice, and others will select corporate dentistry or academia. Whichever path you choose to take, the fact is that you and your classmates may or may not keep in touch, and the opportunities to network with your colleagues will likely dwindle.

There's a lot to be said for staying in contact with former classmates. To this day, I am still in touch with several fellow Emory University Dental School grads, even though the dental school itself ceases to exist. My fellow alumni serve as a great sounding board for ideas and freely share best practices that benefit us all. It's a valuable network of dentists whom you can call upon for professional advice, referrals and more.

A True Homecoming

When I was asked to chair Hinman's 2020 Dental Meeting, it occurred to me that Hinman, like other conferences, is a true homecoming event. Homecomings are a tradition held across the nation whereby universities and high schools invite former alumni (students) to return to their alma mater to celebrate the school, and often football team, with their former classmates and current students. It's a tradition that dates back to the early 1900s. It promotes community, school support and lifelong friendships.

So, our theme for Hinman 2020 is "Come Home to Hinman – Where Teamwork Meets Success." I envisioned its being one big homecoming event dedicated to improving skills, expanding capabilities and collaborating with colleagues and the entire dental team to achieve success. As a young dentist, I always looked forward to seeing my old classmates at dental conferences. If you don't get out of the office and see colleagues, you could start to feel isolated. You also miss out on the opportunity to get input from others on challenging cases, practice management, technology and more.

Preparing for the Future

Attending dental conferences, like Hinman, not only serve as a reunion for you and your classmates, but they can also help prepare you to be a successful business owner and provide a professional network that will support you throughout your career.

DENTAL CONFERENCES OFFER:

CE for New Dentists and Events Tailored Just for Students

Most of the major dental meetings in the country offer special programs and courses for students and emerging dentists. There are often significant discounts offered to students and new dentists. Hinman hosts a half-day session, "GO Track: How New Dentists Can Go Further, Faster!" This year, it's led by Dr. Sully Sullivan, Creator and Host of the Millennial Dentist Podcast, on Friday, March 20, from 1 to 4 p.m. Dr. Sullivan will cover everything from joining an existing practice as an associate to



incorporating technology into your practice to ensure growth.

Collaboration and Networking

In this profession, there's nothing wrong with getting a little help from your friends. In fact, it's incredibly valuable to have a support system and network of professionals you can turn to for advice and assistance. Dental conferences and meetings, as well as dental organizations and societies, give you access to others who can share best practices, consult with you on difficult or challenging cases, or provide advice on new technologies, equipment and services in the profession. Why go it alone when you can learn from others?

Exposure to Dental Advancements

Dentistry continues to evolve and become more and more sophisticated. There are new advancements in dentistry daily. By attending major dental conferences and meetings, you'll have access to hundreds of companies that feature the latest in dental equipment, products and technology. Often, you can demo products and test them prior to investing.

Social and Alumni Events

Sure, who doesn't like a good party? But, social events at dental conferences are the perfect chance to get to know your peers and other experienced dental professionals. Conferences offer many social events that lend themselves to meeting and networking

with others in the industry. Often, there are special receptions and events just for students. At Hinman, you will find alumni receptions hosted by a variety of dental schools as well as a dental student happy hour in the exhibit hall, on Friday, March 20, to connect with other students from around the country.

In today's fast-paced environment, it might be easier to obtain CE online and skip in-person meetings and conferences. But, if you do, you are missing out on the opportunity to set yourself up for success. In just two to three days, you can find valuable tools that will help you launch your career and/or practice, explore the latest equipment and technology needed in dentistry and establish life-long relationships that will support you throughout your career. Dental meetings and organizations like Hinman offer unlimited value and can play an important role in your life as a new dentist.

Dr. Bob O'Donnell is General Chair of the 2020 Thomas P. Hinman Dental Meeting. He is a practicing dentist in historic downtown Alpharetta, Georgia. In 1999, he and his wife, Cheryl, purchased a 70-year-old, historic residence and transformed it into a state-of-the-art dental office. He has been a member of the Hinman Dental Society for 30 years and is a graduate of the Emory Dental School.

