The Summer Student Practitioner Program Experience—
STUDENT AND MENTOR COMMENTS

The SSPP Student Practitioner

The Summer Student Practitioner Program is open to students who have completed their third year and have been successfully promoted to fourth year per the Academic Progress Committee. Since the SSPP is not part of the UBC curriculum, participating students must be duly registered and licensed by the College of Dental Surgeons of BC as a summer student practitioner. This registration allows them to practice dentistry in British Columbia mentored by the principal in a private practice. They must also possess valid malpractice insurance through the Canadian Dental Services Plan Inc.

Typical procedures practised in the program include:
- Recall examinations
- Scaling or hygiene instruction/prevention
- Single canal endodontic procedures
- Conservative operative procedures
- Removable partial dentures
- Complete upper and lower dentures
- Additional simple restorative procedures deemed appropriate by the dentist and the student

The Summer Student Practitioner Program is supported by Pacific Dental Conference Trust, CDISP and UBC Dentistry.

Student feedback

On supervision and role modelling of mentors

"It was good to see different styles of dentistry as well as seeing what we've learned being reinforced." — Don Besson, DMD 2016 candidate

My mentor was an amazing supervisor and role model. I was extremely grateful for his guidance and input. He checked every procedure that I did and was happy to help me if I ended up overlooking something or making a mistake." — Fiona Roth, DMD 2016 candidate

On clinical and other procedures

"Tell very good about the amount and types of clinical procedures I was able to do. I was worried patients wouldn't want a student working on them, but many were more than happy to have me do so." — Don Besson, DMD 2016 candidate

"I love that my mentors started me off slowly, giving me several hours to do one-surface fillings at the start. This helped me get more comfortable in the new clinic, learn where things were and reduce my stress. When I was ready for more challenging and fast-paced work, my mentors were accommodating and gave me as much work as I thought I could handle." — Amanda Campbell, DMD 2016 candidate

The best part of SSPP

"Learning what they [the dentist mentor] did after dental school, how they do procedures, what types of continuing education they would choose, and how they would redo things if they were starting fresh again. This was very valuable." — Don Besson, DMD 2016 candidate

"The best part of SSPP was seeing what a practice is like in the real world. It was so nice to be outside of an academic setting and practice dentistry—I became more excited about going into this profession." — Joclyn Walsh, DMD 2016 candidate

"The best part was just getting comfortable doing some basic work and becoming less afraid to cut into a tooth. It was great to see dentistry in a new context. I probably did more in two or three days at the clinic than in all of my clinical time at UBC." — Fiona Roth, DMD 2016 candidate

You see the challenges that arise in a private clinic, and I got a great view into the business side of the practice. My mentor was great at showing me the importance of knowing how to do every procedure in the clinic—from turning on the lights and computers, to ordering supplies, to cleaning every and sterilizing in the intricate procedures—as you are the one ultimately responsible for them and for teaching the other members [of the practice team] how you expect them to be done. I saw the beautiful opportunity that dentistry provides, where you can create the office atmosphere you want, and it was positive, joyful and community oriented. From birthday lunches to jokes in the morning, we have the ability to create a workplace that we want to go to every day! I left SSPP feeling confident in my career choice." — Kevin Uremos, DMD 2016 candidate

Mentor feedback

On the student mentees

"The best. Eager to learn, listened and tried unfamiliar techniques in a strange environment with instruments that he wasn’t used to." — Dr. Gerry Dyck, Williams Lake, BC

"It makes the ‘old dog’ feel like a pup again. I feed on their enthusiasm." — Dr. Dom Besson, Williams Lake, BC

Other comments

"Interesting to hear what is being taught at UBC and have someone excited about the profession." — Dr. Chris Bryant, Sooke, BC

"Fresh ideas and enthusiasm!" — Dr. Dave Burwash, Cranbrook, BC

"Interesting to hear what is being taught at UBC and have someone excited about the profession." — Dr. David Maycher, Vancouver, BC

The Summer Student Practitioner Program (SSPP) matches dentists with students between third and fourth year for two to six weeks during summer. This gives the student an opportunity to be part of the day-to-day operation and management of a dental practice. Valuable experience indeed before they start their final year of dental school.

Participating dentists enjoy both working with future colleagues and testing the “fit” of a potential associate.

Last summer, 41 students were paired with 63 dentist mentors in 33 locations. At the end of the summer, comments and feedback were gathered from both groups. Read on to find out what some of them wrote about their experience.

On adjusting schedules and roles to accommodate a student

"I put in a new chair based upon need/ experience from previous years." — Dr. Chris Bryant, Sooke, BC

Other comments

"A very worthwhile program!" — Dr. Dave Burwash, Cranbrook, BC

"A fantastic program; we have loved all our students. Real-world experience is so beneficial. Every dentist should be doing that!" — Dr. Gerry Dyck, Williams Lake, BC

Bring Another to Practice

Dentist mentors are needed for the Summer Student Practitioner Program. The success of the program has an ironic twist: each time an SSPP mentor recruits their summer student practitioner as an associate, a potential mentor for the subsequent summer is lost. And generally, there are more dental students interested in the SSPP than available mentors. So the program always needs to recruit new SSPP mentors. Bringing a student into your practice during summer is a simple process; a few clicks is all it takes to get started. For more information about the Summer Student Practitioner Program and to facilitate student matches, visit www.dentistry.ubc.ca/sspp

"It reminds my staff that there is always room to provide compassionate mentoring to all colleagues." — Dr. Chris Bryant, Sooke, BC
I have a friend from Williams Lake who always tells me how beautiful and fun the city is. I often found myself drooling over imagined beautiful hikes that take your breath away and gorgeous lakes to dive in under the summer sun. So, I set out on my search for a summer practitioner program placement in Williams Lake to experience what it's like to live there and practise in a rural community.

After talking to Dr. Sweet (director of Students at UBC Dentistry) and a few students from the DMD upper year, I thought Dr. Gerry Dyck's practice seemed almost what it's like to live there and practise in a rural community. I arrived at the clinic in Williams Lake to experience with my then-pregnant wife on a Thursday evening in July. The clinic was once a church city is. I often found myself drooling over imagined beautiful hikes that take your breath away and gorgeous lakes to dive in under the summer sun. So, I set out on my search for a summer practitioner program placement in Williams Lake to experience what it's like to live there and practise in a rural community.

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My clinical skills, though, weren’t as wonderful to begin with. Getting used to different equipment and to the much-shradder time slot for each patient than I was used to at the UBC clinic was quite a challenge for me. But the clinic eased me into patient care with simpler cases to start.

During the first half of my time there, my restoration work was not very good. One day, Dr. Dyck carved a few dentoform teeth and asked me to fill them with amalgam if I had time. I spent a few hours that night in the clinic practising amalgam fillings over and over again. In my mind, I kept thinking, "KidsOnly clinic must be regretting hiring me for the summer." For some reason, after that night, all my amalgam fillings and other clinical skills improved dramatically. I remember very clearly that, when I asked Dr. Dyck to check my work on one of the fillings, a huge, satisfied smile appeared on his face.

The truth is, the clinic doesn’t earn any money from hiring me. But for them, seeing us dental students grow and gain experience is what really matters. The clinic never regretted hiring me. To the contrary, they even offered me an opportunity to work with them after I graduate.

My experiences up in Williams Lake were absolutely amazing. I now feel very confident treating kids of all ages. And, truly, the hikes were easily accessible and had gorgeous views.

I am not sure where my dentistry career will take me in the future, but I am sure I will take this experience with me wherever I end up and will pay it forward.

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