



THE CANADIAN DENTAL
HYGIENISTS ASSOCIATION
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE
DES HYGIÉNISTES DENTAIRE

For immediate release (Offert en français sur demande)

Media Release

Dental Hygienists in Canada Call for Healthier Workplaces

October 23, 2024 (Ottawa, ON) — As people across Canada mark Healthy Workplace Month this October, dental hygienists are raising awareness of the challenges oral health professionals face daily at work, whether they are in clinical practice, education or public health. The results of a recent Healthy and Respectful Workplace Survey conducted by the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA) show that dental hygienists continue to experience alarming rates of mistreatment and work-related health issues in the workplace.

In the 12 months preceding the 2023 survey, 6 in 10 respondents reported experiencing or witnessing mistreatment, such as incivility, verbal and non-verbal abuse, harassment, and bullying in the workplace. When dental hygienists experienced mistreatment clients were the primary source (26%), followed by co-workers (20%), and dentists and office managers (both at 17%). According to survey data, dental hygienists who are younger, have fewer years of clinical experience, and self-identify as a minority experience higher rates of mistreatment in the workplace.

In addition, more than 8 in 10 respondents reported experiencing work-related pain or discomfort due to the physically demanding and repetitive nature of dental hygiene services. In many cases, repetitive strain injuries lead dental hygienists to reduce their work hours. For those who lack workplace health benefits, a return to full capacity requires them to pay out of pocket for necessary treatment.

“The impacts of unchallenged mistreatment and repetitive strain injuries in the workplace are substantial,” says Alexandra Sheppard, president of CDHA. “Dental hygienists report experiencing high rates of stress and decreased work efficiency and performance. Approximately 39% of our survey

respondents considered quitting their jobs because of mistreatment; 22% considered leaving because of pain and discomfort. We know the cost to employers of replacing dental hygienists is significant, and it is even worse for our patients who may see temporary reductions in oral health care services as a result.”

At a time when the federal government is expanding eligibility for the Canadian Dental Care Plan, CDHA is committed to supporting dental hygienists in their efforts to create healthier and more respectful workplaces. By developing and enforcing workplace harassment and bullying policies, respecting each oral health care team member’s expertise, providing adequate training, support, and ergonomic equipment, fostering open communication, and promoting a positive and psychologically safe culture, workplaces can be healthier environments for dental hygienists and other staff, increase job satisfaction, and in turn deliver positive clinical experiences and better health outcomes for clients

About the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA):

CDHA is the national voice of dental hygienists in Canada. Representing over 31,000 dental hygienists across the country, CDHA advocates for the advancement and promotion of the dental hygiene profession while maintaining a commitment to the public's oral health. Dental hygiene is the sixth largest regulated health profession in Canada with professionals working in a variety of settings, including [independent dental hygiene practice](#), with people of all ages, addressing issues related to oral health. For more details on the 2023 Healthy and Respectful Survey results, visit cdha.ca/healthyworkplacesurvey. For information on the work of CDHA, visit cdha.ca.

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