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President's Message

By John C Comisi DDS, SCDA President



The "Dog Days" of Summer are upon us as we enter the eight month of my Presidency and the Summer Semester at MUSC-JBECDM quickly ends on August 8th.

After a week without classes the College begins its transition on August 14 to the EPIC software system and a new dental module called EPIC Wisdom. This move to these platforms will enable a higher degree of communication between dentistry and medicine.

The complete patient database will be available to our physician colleagues and to us in dentistry. What does that ultimately mean? More effective "total patient care" in my opinion. If a person's blood pressure is elevated at the beginning of our appointments, we can quickly communicate that to his/her physician who can then follow up with the patient to determine what, if any changes are needed in his medication. If there is an airway issue observed via the screening process, that patient can be referred to the Sleep Center at MUSC to have a sleep study initiated. This communication capability, in my opinion, is the future of modern dentistry. It brings all aspects of patient care closer to finding solutions that may have been illusive previously.

Now, of course, as with any initiation of a "new" system, there will be "bumps" that will be encountered, but these will be ultimately overcome, and a comfort level will be established. The complete conversion will be implemented by mid-October. Keeping my fingers crossed, that the bumps will be few here at the College.

I hope that your August will be calm and with no "bumps".

Always at your Service,

John C. Comisi, DDS

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Contract Negotiations – General Info

This guide discusses the basic mechanics of how to negotiate clauses in your insurance provider agreement (i) prior to entering into your agreement, (ii) when your agreement comes up for renewal, and/or (iii) when seeking to increase the reimbursement rates in your fee schedules.

Any contract discussions or negotiations should be done individually, between only you (or your attorney) and the payer, and not with or on behalf of other dentists. Ideally you will be working with an attorney licensed in your practice state, but you can also negotiate on your own behalf.

Before you enter negotiations with a payer, keep the following in mind:

- Negotiation is not a “win-lose” situation. Negotiating is different than elections and sporting events. You do not need to defeat the other party to “win.” Both parties can walk away feeling like they “won.”
- Preparation is the key. Negotiation starts before any direct discussion. Prepare your talking points and do your homework. Prior to discussions, know and jot down:
 - Your interests/needs
 - The payer’s interests/needs
 - Your strengths/resources
 - The payer’s strengths/resources
 - Your alternatives (“Plan B”)

The Negotiation Prep Sheet at the end of this document may be a useful tool in preparing for your negotiation with a payer.

If they said it, and you like it, make sure that it gets into the contract. Once a written contract is signed, oral statements made by the payer during negotiations that are not put in writing are likely meaningless. If you are relying on any oral statements, you must insist they are written into the contract.

HOW TO PROPOSE CHANGES TO YOUR AGREEMENT AND/OR FEE SCHEDULE

If and when you decide to negotiate changes to the agreement with the payer, there are a few common methods for doing so. If you are working with an attorney, your attorney will likely propose changes in the manner he or she sees fit. If you are not working with an attorney, there are a number of ways you can propose changes to the agreement.

- First, you can mark up a printed copy of the agreement with a pen by crossing out the language you don’t want and adding language you do want directly on the printed copy. Put your initials next to your handwritten changes to make clear that the changes were proposed by you.
- Second, you may be able to mark up an electronic copy of the agreement. If you have a “track changes” software program, you can propose changes directly to the electronic copy of the agreement, in which case the changes will show up in “redlined format” (generally deletions are shown as crossed out and additions are underlined). However, this method may be limited or unavailable depending on the format of the document sent to you. For example, if the payer sends you the agreement in PDF file format, you may not be able to use a “track changes” computer program to propose changes. Instead, you may have to propose changes to the electronic copy by adding comments in the margins, or by printing the document and using the first option mentioned above.

- Finally, you can propose changes to the agreement by submitting a separate document that references the specific section numbers you want changed and inserting the changed language into this separate document. For example, in the separate document you might say: “Delete the first sentence of Section 4(a) of the agreement in its entirety and replace with the following....” This option may work best if you are proposing a significant amount of changes to the agreement.
- Of course you can also discuss changes you would like verbally with your payer’s representative or by email, keeping in mind that nothing is final until it’s included in a signed, written agreement.

After all negotiations are completed, you should ask the payer to send you a clean, execution copy of the contract for signature (with all of the agreed-upon changes and including all exhibits thereto, such as the fee schedule). This is preferable to handwritten changes or inserts that are initialed by both parties, but either way is legally enforceable. Make sure the payer counter-signs the agreement and that you have copies of all fully executed documents, as well as any future amendments to the contract.

Contract Negotiations – Fee Schedule Increases

Dentistry is facing increasing costs due to heightened standards for infection control and other economic conditions. Under these circumstances, dental offices may see the need to adjust their fee schedules. The ADA anticipates that the costs of providing care will substantially increase for many dental procedures.

If you are a participating provider with one or more dental benefit plans, you may want to negotiate with those plans to increase your reimbursement rates. **Again, these negotiations should be conducted individually, between only you and your plan, and not with or on behalf of other dentists. Do not discuss fee schedules or other contract points with your colleagues or peers.** Before you enter negotiations with a payer, prepare your talking points and do your homework (see also the general discussion above).

YOUR STRENGTHS: DO YOU HAVE ADVANTAGES IN TERMS OF ACCESS?

- Number of dentists in your locality
 - Understand that typically, supply and demand market forces are affected by geography. Dentists from areas that do not have as many dentists stand a better chance of gaining concessions than those who come from areas with a higher density of practicing dentists.
- Wait times for available appointments, impacting the patients covered under the plan
- Influx of new patients covered under the plan

YOUR NUMBERS: WHAT DATA DO YOU NEED TO NEGOTIATE EFFECTIVELY?

Know which procedure codes generate the highest total revenue for your practice, including:

- Frequency with which each procedure is reported
- Current allowed amount (i.e., your current discounted fee)
- Extent of these procedure codes’ contribution to your overall practice revenue
- Your desired fee for each procedure code

YOUR DESIRED FEE FOR EACH PROCEDURE CODE

- Extent of preventive services that your office provides
- Costs associated with operating your business
- Patient satisfaction rates (most recent available)
- Date when your fees were last revised

EFFICIENCIES YOU OFFER: WHICH OF YOUR BUSINESS PRACTICES ARE FAVORABLE TO THE PAYER?

- Electronic claims submission
- Use of online portals to verify eligibility and benefits
- EFT enabled for receipt of claim payments

REVIEW THE ADA'S 2022 Survey of Dental Fees

- Use all of the above the information you have gathered to tell your story.
- Identify the payer's provider representative assigned to your region who you can contact to begin to make your case. This may be someone known to your business staff, typically with the title of "provider relations manager."
- Begin with email introductions. If comfortable, request a phone call, or continue in writing.
- Always be respectful. Let the provider relations representative know that you value the patients garnered from being a network dentist.
- Be patient and don't give up! The first offer you receive may not be the best offer.
- Set realistic expectations. Negotiating with plans can be an uphill battle and a frustrating process that will rarely result in complete success in getting all of the changes you desire.
- Request information on whether the carrier leases their network and whether the revised fees will apply to any networks into which you have been leased.
- Representations or assurances on important matters made by a payer's provider representative(s) should be reduced to writing. Mere oral representations are not sufficient.
- After you succeed, make sure you have copies of all signed documents.
- Check the next Explanation of Benefits statements to ensure the fee changes are appropriately reflected.
- Remember to re-negotiate periodically.

Good practice is to review your contracted fee schedules annually. Additionally, remember that it is very important to report your full fee on the claim form. Several payers set fees based on market rates. Payers may use the charges you submit to determine maximum-allowable fees. The fee schedules are typically part of the participating provider agreement – a legal contract between the dentist and the third-party payer.

Other clauses in the contract along with documents referenced in the contract (i.e., the provider's office reference manual) may impact the final payment from the third-party payer. For example, details about a policy that bundles the fee for a core buildup with the fee for the crown are in the provider's office reference manual along with details on other processing policies. It is important to review these documents carefully before trying to project revenues and negotiating fees with the payer.

Negotiation Prep Sheet

The following may be a useful tool in preparing your talking points and doing your homework prior to negotiation:

NEGOTIATION PREP SHEET

List of Your Needs/Wants	Payer's Needs/Wants (your best estimate)		Additional Notes
Goals and objectives- note those that are most important ("got to have" - e.g. pricing, right to terminate, indemnification obligations)			
Strengths of each position (positive arguments)			
Weak points/ vulnerabilities in each position			
Options ("Plan B"s) if you do not reach an agreement			
Concessions – points on which you might concede (where there are a number of items to negotiate)			

Additional information on contracts, processing policies and other valuable educational ready-to-use resources on innovative dental insurance solutions for dentists are available at [ADA.org/dentalinsurance](https://www.ada.org/dentalinsurance).

*Disclaimer. These materials are intended to provide helpful information to dentists and dental team members. They are in no way a substitute for actual professional advice based upon your unique facts and circumstances. **This content is not intended or offered, nor should it be taken, as legal or other professional advice.** You should always consult with your own professional advisors (e.g., attorney, accountant, insurance carrier). To the extent ADA has included links to any third party web site(s), ADA intends no endorsement of their content and implies no affiliation with the organizations that provide their content. Further, ADA makes no representations or warranties about the information provided on those sites.*

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By D-MMEX Easyrefine an SCDA Endorsed Company



Summer is heating up, and you could be earning extra summer cash by refining your precious scrap metals with SCDA-endorsed D-MMEX Easyrefine. Access to a reputable source for refining your practice's precious metals is a valuable benefit of membership in the SCDA. You can now enjoy a service endorsed by 11 state dental associations and used by thousands of dentists internationally, while maximizing your return. Now through Sept. 30, Easyrefine will add 7% to the total refining value of your precious scrap metals.

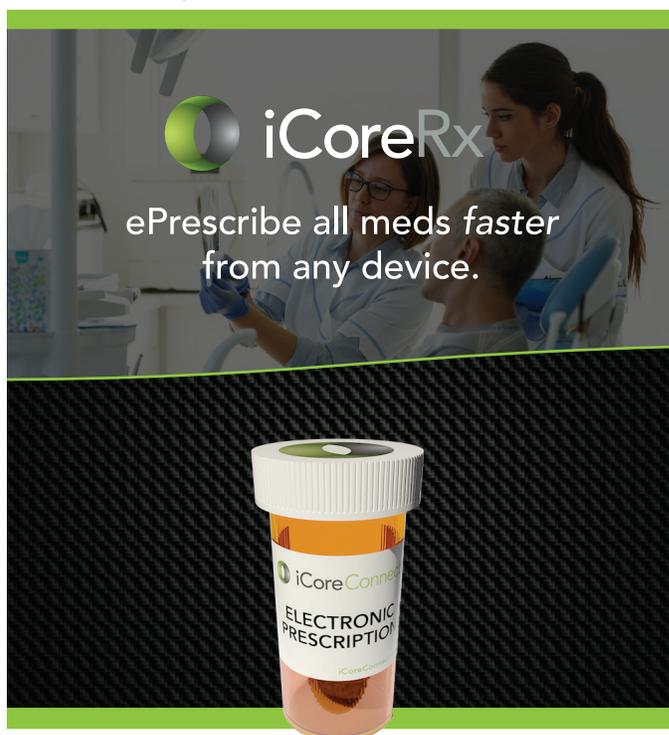
The standard SCDA member bonus of 5% on the total value of dental scrap metals is being boosted by an additional 2%, giving you a total bonus value of 7%. Easyrefine pays 97% of the value of gold, 90% of the value of platinum and silver, and 85% of the value of palladium, which continues to trade at higher prices than gold. While you may submit jewelry, minus precious stones, the additional 2% bonus is applied only to dental scrap. Check the values on the London metal market at easyrefine.com.

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—M. Lynn Wallace, SCDA Past President

Easyrefine typically sends payment via check, along with the scientific report on your submission, in about 10 days. Submit your precious scrap metal now and have extra summer cash! Access to Easyrefine and the member bonus is a benefit of your membership in the SCDA. Your refining payment could pay for your membership many times over. The Easyrefine team is waiting for your shipment!



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Passion for Pearly Whites: Retired Columbia Dentist Planning to Re-open Museum of Dental History in Columbia By WLTX

Dental chairs, forceps and teeth are just some of the items you'll be able to see when the Museum of Dental History is officially open to the public. A retired dentist has been collecting artifacts for decades, and gave News 19 a look at his collection.

"I loved every minute of it," Dr. Staci Gaffos shares about his 56 years practicing dentistry. "It wasn't like going to work. It was like going to play."

Gaffos is recently retired, but he hasn't given up on dentistry. Now, he's dedicating his time to sharing it with the public through opening the museum of dental history on Crowson Road at the intersection of Fort Jackson Boulevard and Devine Street.

"I was a collector and I collected stamps and coins and why not dental stuff?" Gaffos remembers. "I would go to antique stores and say, 'Do you have any old dental stuff?' And no one ever had any."

This prompted Gaffos to join the American Academy of the History of Dentistry, where he eventually became president. He collected everything from teeth to old toothpaste holders to dental chairs from World War I. In 2008, he decided to start a museum, which he was finally ready to open in 2014. Just a few months later, the 1,000 year flood hit Columbia.

"Four feet of raging water came in here," Gaffos recalls. "So I had to start all over again."

He's spent the last nine years restoring the damage that was done — and now he's finally ready to re-open. Gaffos tells me he's excited to see people, which is something he's missed since retiring.

"I loved my patients and it felt like you were doing a service to people to keep them out of pain and give them a nice smile and give them a healthy mouth," Gaffos smiles.

Now, he's hoping to serve through educating people about dentistry, which he learned about through a career that started with inspiration from his hometown of Camden.

Gaffos says his "good friend" had just gotten out of the military.

"He was a modern dentist. He gave Novacane," Gaffos smiles thinking about Dr. David Joseph. "Before that, dentists weren't even giving Novacane so he just inspired me with his professionalism."

Gaffos graduated from the University of South Carolina. Then, Gaffos realized his next adventure would take him away from the Palmetto State.

"I had a good friend, Dr. Neill Macaulay, who was on the medical board down at MUSC. And he helped me to get in dental school because when I was trying to get in dental school, they didn't have one in South Carolina," Gaffos explains. "So he was the liaison between students trying to get into dental school and out-of-state dental school and so he helped me get into University of Alabama."

It was Macaulay who inspired Gaffos to start collecting dental artifacts as a way to preserve history.

"I think Woodrow Wilson once said, 'The further you can look back to history, the further you can look into the future.'" Gaffos shares. "So I think we look back and see where dentistry has come from."

Gaffos tells News 19 he plans to open that museum to the public twice a week on Fridays and Saturdays starting in July.

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Strengthening Support of MUSC Faculty

By Dr. Sarandeep Huja, Dean, James B. Edwards College of Dental Medicine



Dear SCDA member:

I am pleased to share that Dr. Martin Steed has been named the James B. Edwards Endowed Chair in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery. The college attracts some of the best dental educators in the world, and as dean, nothing is more gratifying than being able to congratulate Dr. Steed on receiving this tremendously well-deserved honor. He has already directed a portion of the endowment to support the recruitment of a fellowship-trained craniofacial surgeon, who will provide cutting-edge expertise and training, benefiting our patients, faculty and residents.

An endowed chair is the highest accolade and one of the strongest supports that any faculty member can receive. The Edwards chair is the college's first endowed chair, a seminal milestone. Thanks to the generosity of the SCDA and your membership, we look forward to naming a second endowed chair in the not-too-distant future. I wish to express our profound gratitude for your sustained commitment to the future of dental education in South Carolina.

On May 25, we held a reception to honor the memory of Dr. Edwards as a beloved leader and celebrate his legacy. We were joined by MUSC leaders, friends of the college from all over the state, and members of the Edwards family, in our Dental Clinics Building. A highlight for me – and I think all our guests would agree – were the warm and inspirational remarks from special guest Mrs. Ann Edwards, former first lady of MUSC and South Carolina, who with her late husband created the endowed chair. MUSC's Catalyst News says more the about reception – and Dr. Steed's impact in education, research, and patient care – which I share with you here.

Dr. Edwards, the college's namesake, was an oral surgeon, as well as president of MUSC, governor of South Carolina and U.S. Secretary of Energy. Dr. and Mrs. Edwards are among MUSC's leading patrons. Their generosity through the endowed chair will benefit generations of faculty and students through learning, innovation, and patient care in oral and maxillofacial surgery.

In closing, I want to recommend an upcoming continuing education opportunity, worth seven credit hours, for providers and care team members. The 24th annual Carlos F. Salinas Dental Program for the Diagnosis and Treatment of Individuals with Special Health Care Needs is on Sept. 29. For more information and to register, please visit our [website](#).



From left: Mrs. Kathy Cole, President David Cole, Provost Lisa Saladin, myself, Dr. Martin Steed and MUSC Board of Trustees Chair Dr. James Lemon join Mrs. Ann Edwards (seated), at a May 25 reception. Photo by Sarah Pack



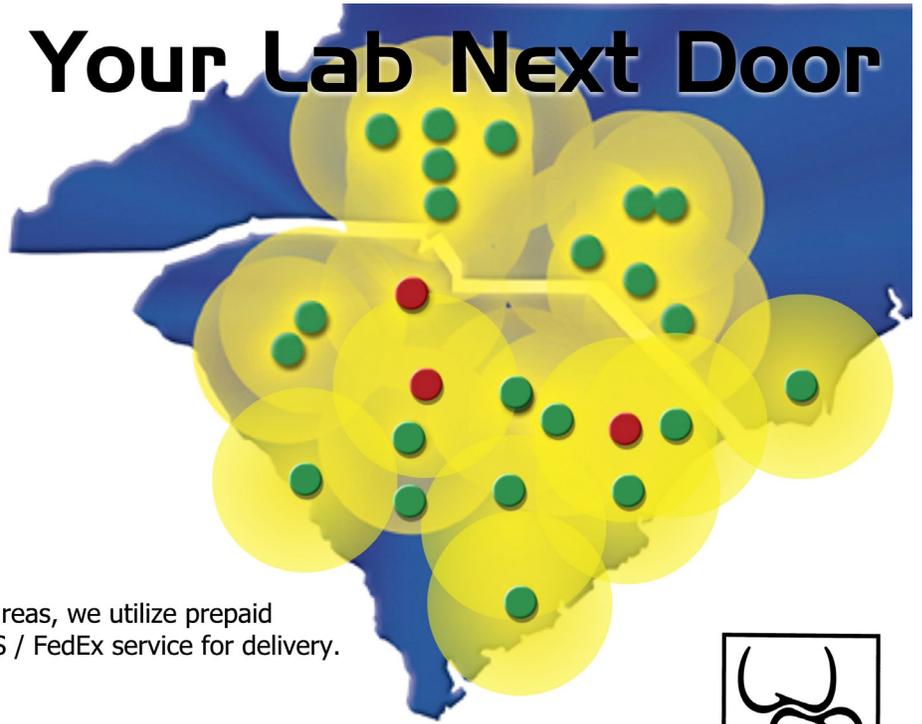
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FT or PT Associate Dentist needed for a well-established private practice in Market Common district in **Myrtle Beach**. We're a family practice that provides IV/oral sedation, dental implants, grafting and surgical extractions. Fully trained & highly experienced team. Income potential is excellent. Email CV to lisa@marketcommondentistry.com.

Seneca, SC practice is seeking an associate dentist with outstanding clinical skill. We're privately owned, patient-driven, and searching for the right dentist to join our growing practice. All digital, CEREC, excellent support staff. Full or Part time. DrJosh@senecadentist.com

This is a **once in a lifetime opportunity** to join a quality focused, fee for service, group practice in a high growth area. Please visit brickyarddentalgroup.com/associateship to apply or to learn more about this opportunity.

Fort Mill SC- PT associateship position open, Wed-Fri. Daily base vs production guaranteed. Restorations, crowns, bridges, extractions, partials. cbmcdonalds@gmail.com.

Excellent opportunity and competitive compensation for new graduate or experienced dentist. We are looking for full or part time dentist to join our rapidly growing practice in the lovely **Forest Acres** community in Columbia SC. If interested or have questions text 803-447-6373 or email cdcsmls@live.com.

The MUSC JBE College of Dental Medicine seeks applications for a full-time faculty position - the **Director for the Nexton Dental Clinic**. This is a full-time, non-tenure position. Requirements: At least 10 years clinical experience, proficiency in Digital Dentistry technology. The candidate will provide direct clinical care and instruct students. garvins@musc.edu

Busy practice needs another **dentist!** Benefits include- health insurance, malpractice, license fees, DEA registration, vacation, etc. Motivation and initiative are high priorities. Would love to entertain a conversation. Send resume or contact for info drrohrn@live.com.

Busy and growing dental practice in beautiful **Fort Mill, SC** is looking for an associate general dentist to join our expanding team. Competitive and excellent pay for qualified candidate. Experience is preferred but not mandatory. State of the art facility, computerized and paperless. For more information or please contact beth@friendlydentalgroup.com.

dentistsofdevine.com- All digital practice with CAD/CAM, EPIC software, partnership opportunity, CE courses, \$15K welcome bonus, full benefits, malpractice, all lab costs covered. Lauren.haney@pacden.com

Seeking Associate with buy-in option- We're a private dental practice in **Seneca, SC**, known for providing exceptional dental care to our patients. Our practice is equipped with state-of-the-art technology & offers a wide range of services. To apply, submit resume, cover letter and relevant documents to maliarefricksondds@hotmail.com.

Lead Dentist opportunity at an established practice in upscale **Columbia, SC!** Enjoy a 4-day work week and incredibly talented staff that has been with the team for decades. To apply please send your resume directly to Kelly Kakkuri at kkakkuri@oakpoint.us for more details. Compensation & benefits: ownership/equity, sign on & relocation bonus available. 4-day work week, Monday through Thursday 7:30 am- 3:00 pm.

We're looking for a dentist to join our multi-specialty **Columbia** area location. Modern office with CBCT, digital scanner, 3D printer, and implant system. Busy practice seeing a cash pay patient base. Huge income opportunity and sign-on bonus. Mentorship opportunities and defined path to ownership. Call/Text at 919.410.5216 or email abrakefield@ammons dental.com.

Come work with us and achieve greatness. We are seeking a FT dentist to join our busy general practice in **Columbia, SC**. Simply Smile is an updated practice with an energetic atmosphere. We offer great benefits, compensation, and the ability to work independently with a supportive and trained staff. Mon-Fri. new grads welcome. Send resume to simplysmile7457@gmail.com.

Positions Available- Staff

Looking for a New Dental Team member, for a **Full time Dental Hygiene** position in wonderful Irmo, Sc! 32-36 hours a week, 8a.m.-5p.m. Monday-Friday (60min recares/80min New Patients) Exceptional Pay!!!! Sign on bonus!! Please call/text- 1 (843) 593-6428 info@foxdentalstaffing.com

Looking for a New Dental Team member, for a Full time **Front Desk** position in Beautiful Bluffton, Sc! Please call/text- 1 (843) 593-6428

Join the team. We are looking for More Dental Team members, both temporary (Full-time) and Permanent (Full-time) positions in SC, NC and GA! info@foxdentalstaffing.com

Looking for a New Dental Team member, for a temporary **Dental Hygiene** position in the beautiful town of Beaufort, Sc! 7:30am - 4:00pm. Fun & Energetic Environment. Egelsoft & Dexis. 60min recares/80min New Patients/ 30 min child prophyl. Competitive Pay. All Proper PPE Provided. Please call/text- (843) 593-6428 info@foxdentalstaffing.com

Full time **certified dental assistant** position in a busy pediatric dental office. Duties include taking digital dental radiographs, chair side assistance to the dentist during a variety of treatment procedures. Must be a dynamic team player. Only certified Dental Assistants need to apply. Email resume and references to dmd4kids@bellsouth.net.

A state of the art- paperless dental practice is seeking a highly energetic **RDH** to complete our team. General office of 18+ years that uses itero scan for invisalign braces- Eaglesoft digital x-rays. Your uniforms, CE and medical insurance will be provided. Send resume to 147 Charlotte Ave. Rock Hill, SC 29730.

Once in a lifetime opportunity to be part of Maxillofacial Prosthodontics and Head and Neck Surgery Team! Together, we will improve quality of life of patients with complex dental and maxillofacial needs. Duties include but are not limited to taking CBCT, 3D intraoral scans, **assisting chairside** and in OR Email resume or CV and references to leeby@musc.edu.

Irmo, SC- Dental hygienist needed. Full time/part time, Monday-Thursday 8am-5pm, lunch 12-1. Competitive pay with experience. acm5765@aol.com.

Practices/Office Space Available

Satellite dental office; 52 foot trailer. One operatory fully equipped white coastal chair. One operatory plumbed and ready. Lab, reception, business office, 1 full bathroom. Available to be donated to a legitimate charity for their use as a dental clinic call 803-617-8701.

Savannah, GA Periodontal Practice for Sale- Six operatories with an expansion opportunity for an additional op. The current doctor is interested in a partnership with another dentist. 75 new patient referrals/month (with no marketing)! Collections \$1.4 M & EBITDA \$335,000. To learn more, contact Sam Schoenecker with Professional Transition Strategies: sam@professionaltransition.com or 719.694.8320.

Spectacular GP for sale in **Columbia, SC** only 8 miles from downtown! Practice is collecting over \$650,00 with 4 operatories with tons of room for growth. Fully digital, amazing location. Extremely low overhead with high profit margin. To find out more about this practice, please contact Bradley at 803-463-6636.

Dental laboratory for sale in **Summerville, SC**. Asking price is \$400,000. Contact Bradley Lloyd 803-463-6636 or blloydcommercial@gmail.com.

Pedo office for sale: **Charleston, SC**- great location on busy road. 4 chair open bay and 2 closed operatories. Loyal patient base of 3,000+ active patients. Significant room for growth as doctor does little to no advertising. pedodentaloffice4sale@gmail.com

Office space available in **Columbia SC**. 3 operatories, 2 fully equipped, reception, private office, 2 bathrooms, lab. Call 803-798-7001.

Office For Sale in **Greenwood**- Established general practice, 40 year history 1.5m collections prior year, strong fee schedules. Loyal patient base, Underserved area means student loan forgiveness may be available to provider. Building also for sale. jwhite@hci-eps.com.

For Sale

3,300 SF **Office Space For Lease**. Asking rate: \$18.50/SF NNN. Space delivered in shell condition. Tenant improvement allowance: \$40/SF (negotiable). Located minutes away from Patewood Medical Campus and I-385. matt@pintailcre.com



We are pleased to announce...

Erwin R. Baker, D.M.D.
has merged into the practice of
Bela Family Dentistry
Newberry, South Carolina

Joseph L. Griffin Jr., D.M.D.
has acquired the practice of
Richard M. Andrews, D.M.D.
Timmonsville, South Carolina

*We are pleased to have assisted
in these practice transitions.*

Practices For Sale

MILLION DOLLAR PRACTICE OPPORTUNITY: GP located in a free-standing building on a quaint street in Charleston. The office has 5 ops in 1,900 sq. ft. with digital x-ray and an IT-Pro Laser Scanner. The practice has a mixture of PPO and FFS patients. Currently, operating on 4 doctor days and 8-10 hygiene days per week. This opportunity is only for a dentist-to-dentist transition. **Opportunity ID: SC-7859**

MERGER/FIRE SALE: Lowered sales price to \$125K. Charleston GP located in a stand-alone building with great street visibility. It has 3 ops in 1,550 sq. ft. The owner currently refers out most procedures, so there is tremendous growth potential. This practice can be an excellent satellite office or an outstanding opportunity for an eager dentist to grow or for immediate growth for an existing practitioner. The owner is flexible with their transition plans. Real estate may also be available. The seller is highly motivated, call AFTCO now! **Opportunity ID: SC-7845**

SATELLITE, MERGER OR START-UP OPPORTUNITY: West Ashley region of Charleston GP situated in a charming office complex. The 1,000 sq. ft. space houses 2 fully furnished operatories, and a partially equipped third room that's already plumbed. With over 750 active patients that are 64% PPO and 36% FFS, the practice operates efficiently on just 4 doctor and 4 hygiene days per week. Most specialty procedures are referred out, creating an extraordinary potential for growth. **Opportunity ID: SC-7771**

Go to our website or call to request information on other opportunities!

800.232.3826

Practice Sales & Purchases Over \$3.2 Billion

www.AFTCO.net