

2021 BCDHA COVID-19 February Survey

Executive Summary

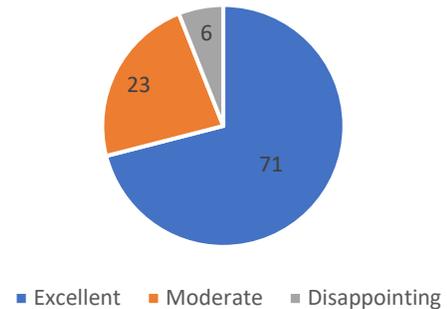
British Columbia Dental Hygienists' Association members were again surveyed to learn of their experiences during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Between Jan 18 - Feb 22, 2021, 406 responses were collected.

Return to Work Experience

71% of dental hygienists (DHs) that returned to work reported an excellent experience (great collaboration and communication with their employer, team preparation, enough PPE supply). According to DHs working at multiple practices, experiences can differ. Frustration stems from:

- Differing infection control guideline interpretations
 - *Aerosol generating medical procedure (AGMP) use*
 - *COVID pre-screening procedures*
- Limited extra fallow time scheduled
- Restrictions imposed on PPE/mask (N95/KN95) supplies
- Incohesive or inconsistent teamwork
- Productivity/billing pressures from employer

Return to Work Experience



Hiatuses and Closures

Only 8% experienced a closure due to a confirmed COVID-19 exposure since the resumption of in-person oral health care in June 2020.

Positive exposures occurred at clinical/private dental practices, long-term care facilities, public health/community practices, and in education. None were reported from private DH practices or research facilities.

If a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 exposure occurred in their workplaces, DHs perceived that

72% of employers would react appropriately to an exposure

26% of employers would not react appropriately to an exposure

Unfortunately, DHs expressed concern that employers

- May not inform staff about suspected or confirmed cases
- May not be understanding about self-isolation requirements
- May prioritize office production

Impacts on Scheduling

In comparison to prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, DHs from a variety of practice settings reported:

64% working the same/more hours

30% working less or on leave

The remaining 6% reported intending to or have already left for retirement, or dissatisfaction.

57% were not concerned about employment security

43% were slightly-extremely concerned about employment security

Only 29% of those in private DH or dental clinical practices reported having had their hours or days cut by their offices. Reasons provided were:

- A lack of patients booking
- Childcare demands
- Restricted access to practice site (# of in-person staff per day, long term care outbreaks)
- Fear of rising COVID-19 cases
- Offices hiring recent graduates
- Respondents leaving their practices

British Columbia Dental Hygienists' Association

Suite 307-9600 Cameron St. Burnaby, BC V3J 7N3

Tel: 604.415.4559 • 1.888.305.3338 • Fax: 604.415.4579 • www.bcdha.com

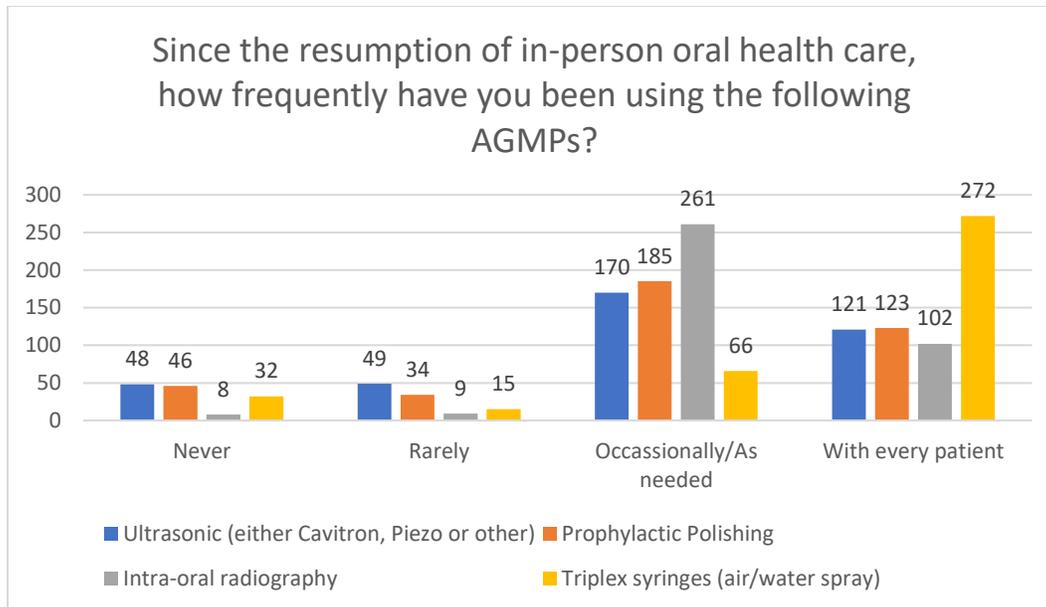


College Guidance Interpretation

Although the 4 oral healthcare colleges developed [a joint guidance document](#), DHs were concerned as interpretations vary widely, and called for more prescriptive guidance. Troublingly, 44% report that their employer is only somewhat to not at all supportive in ongoing collaborative discussions as the situation develops and guidelines are clarified.

Aerosol Generating Medical Procedures (AGMPs)

DHs have cut down use of most AGMPs, opting to use them mostly as needed.



Increased incidence of hand strain was reported as DHs move to using hand instrumentation to prevent aerosol production. DHs are frustrated because of pressure from their employers to use AGMPs in situations they feel are unsafe, again calling for more prescriptive guidelines.

BCDHA Advocacy

BCDHA is proud to have advocated for DHs and other oral healthcare providers in multiple aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic response:

- [Vaccination prioritization](#): DHs are now eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccines in BC.
- [Nasopharyngeal swabs and mouth rinses for COVID-19 screening by DHs employed under a health authority](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccination Administration](#): DHs may sign up to get trained to administer vaccines.

Conclusion

DHs in B.C. are adapting moderately well, despite some interruption in their practices. Collaborative and open discussions with their employers/teammates, PPE control and supply, practice adaptations, and college guidance are the main concerns DHs have in practice. DHs remain active and enthusiastic in remaining educated about the COVID-19 pandemic, providing support in a professional capacity in their employment settings, volunteer work towards COVID-19 with BCDHA, and soon as COVID-19 vaccine immunizers with health authorities.

British Columbia Dental Hygienists' Association

Suite 307-9600 Cameron St. Burnaby, BC V3J 7N3

Tel: 604.415.4559 • 1.888.305.3338 • Fax: 604.415.4579 • www.bcdha.com

