



Connections. Perspective. Insight.

Volunteerism

The Electronic Journal of the Volunteer Community

Feature Articles

Vol VII, Issue 3, Apr-June 2008

This is an authorized reprint of an article that appears online at:
<http://e-volunteerism.com/quarterly/08apr/08apr-zinissgan-cohen.php>
May not be reproduced without permission

Satisfaction among Volunteer Dentists Serving Underprivileged Elderly in Jerusalem

By Avraham Zini and Harold D. Sgan-Cohen

Abstract

Objectives: To examine the satisfaction of volunteering dentists.

Methods: Questionnaires were submitted to 67 dentists who were currently volunteering on a regular basis at a geriatric dental clinic in Jerusalem. Questions included: How had the dentist heard about the clinic; the reason for volunteering; satisfaction with the lectures, clinical training, secretaries, assistants, laboratory; and the level of reaching their expectations.

Results: The main reason that led to volunteering was "contribution to the community" and for "acquiring skills". Most volunteers answered that the volunteering experience had fulfilled their expectations. When the reason for volunteering was "contribution to the community", there was less satisfaction from the lectures ($p < 0.001$), and from the clinical training ($p = 0.041$).

Discussion: The act of volunteering for dentists expresses social solidarity and willingness to contribute, which should be nurtured and promoted. Ways of improving this satisfaction need to be addressed, explored and applied for the benefit of the health care providers and the community recipients.

Introduction

[Yad Sarah](http://www.yadsarah.org) (www.yadsarah.org) is an Israeli nationwide network of volunteers that aids needy, disabled and elderly people and is morally committed to the value of social welfare and mutual aid. The organization relies on volunteers and provides many essential services which are not covered by the government, such as lending medical equipment, day rehabilitation centers, legal aid council for seniors, provides personal alarm systems, oxygen setup, cardiac apnea monitors, transportation for the disabled, laundry services for the incontinent, meals and meals-on-wheels deliveries, maintenance workshops and geriatric dental services.¹

The volunteers in Yad Sarah's Jerusalem-based geriatric dental clinic include young and senior dentists and a dedicated, permanent administrative staff. All contribute time and knowledge in order to provide optimal care to the needy elderly population, following the conventional guidelines of modern dentistry and thereby attaining a high standard of quality.²



Volunteer dentists at Yad Sarah dental clinic

In order to compensate the volunteering dentists and and to generate their obligation, Yad Sarah developed a training program within the clinic which provides the dentists with theoretical and clinical knowledge in "Gerodontology." This training plan has been established in cooperation with the Department of Community

Dentistry, the Faculty of Dental Medicine at the Hebrew University-Hadassah in Jerusalem, and there is no similar venue in Israel. Volunteer dentists are required to work in the clinic at least once a week, and to attend 80% of the lectures. After three years, each dentist receives a certificate of proficiency in "Gerodontology."

Between the years 2000-2006, the dental clinics (central and mobile units) admitted 6,380 new patients for treatment. There were 40,867 visits to the clinic, with 45,345 dental treatments provided.

During this period, a total of 151 dentists volunteered, for a total of 73 females (48%) and 78 males (52%). The average age was 39.10, ranging from 23 years to 74 years. The females were younger than the males (37.31 years vs. 40.77 years respectively). In all, 67 dentists graduated from an Israeli university and 84 graduated abroad. There were 56 new immigrants and 94 natives.

The goal of the study was to examine the satisfaction of the volunteering dentists at Yad Sarah. Specific objectives included evaluating satisfaction with clinical training, lectures, clinic staff support and fulfillment of expectations.

Rationale for the Study

The demographic changes in the world indicate a trend of increased population growth among the elderly.³ This clearly demands appropriate health care delivery attention by both the private and public sectors⁴⁻⁵. Societies must locate optimal solutions for medical treatment provided for underserved populations. This is often difficult due to financial restraints and/or a lack of adequate or appropriate personnel. Volunteer medical and dental practitioners provide an important manpower solution, where other options are not available. This potential therefore needs to be optimally appreciated, investigated and understood.

Research has shown that volunteer physicians often feel significantly involved in the quality of treatment and concerned over the lack of accessible service.⁶ They are also concerned with the medico-legal aspects and insurance coverage options.⁷ Volunteer physicians are motivated by altruism, benefit from the learning experience, and expect appreciation and appropriate support.⁸ The importance of positive feedback from the volunteering organization has not always been given ample priority.⁹ Physicians are prompted to volunteer by both personal and national triggers and events.¹⁰ Volunteer physicians from the developed westernized world are often attracted to volunteer opportunities in developing countries.¹¹⁻¹²

Methods

In this study, questionnaires were submitted to the 67 dentists currently volunteering on a regular basis at the clinic in Jerusalem. The questionnaires did not include personal details of the dentist and anonymity was assured.

Questions included:

- How the dentists heard about the Yad Sarah clinic.
- The main reason for volunteering.
- Satisfaction with the lectures, the clinical training, the work performed by secretaries and assistants and the laboratory
- The level of reaching their expectations.

Results

Most of the dentists (63 out of 67) filled out the questionnaires. Because of the anonymity, the profile of the dentists who did not answer was not available.

Motivation to volunteer:

To the question, "How did you hear about Yad Sarah?" (Table 1), most answered that they had heard about it from other volunteering dentists. The majority or 54% of the dentists noted that they volunteered in order to make a "contribution to the community;" another 39.7% volunteered in order to acquire skills.

Table 1 - Distribution of reasons that led to the volunteering

The question	Options	Percentage
1. How did you hear about the Yad Sarah clinic?	I heard from another volunteering dentist.	68.3%
	I participated in the lectures that are given at Yad Sarah	6.3%
	I saw some publication	3.2%
	Other way (There was an option to write a few words)	22.2%
2. What was the main reason that led you to volunteer?	Contribution to the community	54.0%
	Acquiring skills	39.7%
	The certificate received from Yad-Sarah and from the Faculty of Dental Medicine after three years of volunteering	3.2%
	Other reason (there was an option to write a few words)	3.2%

Volunteer's satisfaction:

Table 2 depicts the distribution of satisfaction by different components of the experience. Satisfaction was high from the clinical training (87.3%), the secretaries (96.8%), and the assistants' functioning (87.3%). Levels were lower for the lectures (74.6%) and dental technician laboratories (70.8%). Most volunteers (96.8%) answered that the volunteering experience fulfilled their expectations.

Table 2 - Distribution of satisfaction (%) among the volunteering and the accompanying components

Satisfaction from	Very high	High	Little	Very little	Missing
Lectures	33.3	41.3	6.3	---	19.0
Clinical training	44.4	42.9	6.3	6.3	---
Secretaries' functioning	57.1	39.7	3.2	---	---
Assistants functioning	50.8	36.5	12.7	---	---
Laboratory	23.8	47.6	15.9	6.3	6.3
Degree of suitability	49.2	47.6	3.2	---	---

Analysis of satisfaction levels, according to the reason for volunteering, is presented in Table 3. When the reason for volunteering was "contribution to the community," there was less satisfaction from the lectures ($p < 0.0001$) than from the clinical training ($p = 0.041$)

Table 3 - Distribution of the satisfaction (%) from the volunteering and the accompanying systems and significance differences according to the reasons that led to the volunteering

Satisfaction from	**Contribution to the community				
	Very high	High	Little	Very little	Missing
Lectures	23.1	76.9	0	0	0
Clinical training	47.1	41.2	11.8	0	0
Secretaries' functioning	52.9	47.1	0	0	0
Assistants' functioning	52.9	41.2	5.9	0	0
Laboratory	13.3	66.7	20.0	0	11.8
Degree of suitability	52.9	47.1	0	0	0

Table 3, *continued*

Satisfaction from	**Other reasons					P*
	Very high	High	Little	Very little	Missing	
Lectures	60.0	24.0	16.0	0	0	< 0.001
Clinical training	41.4	44.8	0	13.8	0	0.041
Secretaries' functioning	62.1	31.0	6.9	0	0	0.166
Assistants' functioning	48.3	31.0	20.7	0	0	0.201
Laboratory	37.9	34.5	13.8	6.8	0	0.012
Degree of suitability	44.8	48.3	3.2	0	0	0.278

* Two sides chi-square test.

** What was the main reason that led you to volunteer?

The concluding question in the present study was directed to the fulfillment of the original expectations; in all, 96.8% of the dentists answered that the volunteering experience had much or very much met their expectations.

Discussion

Yad Sarah is an example of dental treatment provided to an underserved population who has no alternative private or public source of available care. Yad Sarah houses the largest geriatric dental clinic in Jerusalem. Neither the local municipal nor the national health services cover the expenses involved in geriatric dental health services. In order to continue, improve and expand these services, it is therefore essential to foster satisfaction and impetus of the volunteers.

Dentists at Yad Sarah volunteer in order to contribute to their community by helping those in need. An additional purpose of these dentists is to advance their professional careers. Yad Sarah provides continued education in Gerodontology in collaboration with the Hebrew University-Hadassah School of Dental Medicine.

We found that most of the volunteering dentists heard about the program from their colleagues. The recommendations were both professional and social and also from the dental school. This demonstrates the important symbiosis between the Faculty of Dental



Treatment with mobile dental clinic – homebound patients

Medicine and the clinic at Yad Sarah. This relationship is expressed in the design and the application of the ongoing curriculum.¹³ The Dental School is closely involved with Yad Sarah, assists in recruitment of volunteering dentists, and initiates joint activities and professional meetings and conferences.

The main motives for volunteering, revealed in this study, were the wish to contribute to the community (54.0%), and the desire to acquire professional skills (39.7%). It is encouraging that a primary motive is the altruistic desire to benefit elderly and homebound people.

In a concurrent study, we found that female dentists appeared to volunteer without additional motives (e.g., an educational program) more than their male counterparts. Male dentists, on the other hand, wished to advance themselves both financially and professionally.

Older dentists demonstrated a tendency to volunteer without participating in the educational program. It may be that these dentists wished to volunteer their experience, but didn't need a specific educational program. This might therefore be an important potential high-yield target group.

We found a significantly higher percentage of volunteer dentists from abroad, compared to native Israelis. It might be suggested that immigrants who wish to establish their professionalism seek to do so through volunteering, thereby gaining recognition within the community.

Native Israelis are the main core of the continued education program (EP). The reasons for this might include being familiar with Yad Sarah, recognizing the need to improve professional knowledge and working techniques in Gerodontology, and to contribute to society.

As a general rule, the degree of volunteer satisfaction was found to be high. Satisfaction from the clinic staff and the clinical guidance was high, but satisfaction with the lectures was lower. Satisfaction from the laboratory services was the lowest. It might be expected that private dentists prefer their own individually chosen technicians.

Overall satisfaction with the volunteering experience was very high. In all, 96.8% of the dentists answered that the volunteering experience had much or very much met their expectations. Those dentists whose primary motivation was to acquire skills expressed higher satisfaction from the lectures and the clinical training, which might indicate their emphasis.

The relationship between the dentists and the activities of the sponsoring organization is of great importance. At Yad Sarah, a wide variety of services are provided. It was disappointing that dentists were unaware of many services beyond the dental clinic. Yad Sarah did not succeed in directing the volunteering dentists to become more involved in the entire activities of the organization. This indicates a serious flaw and an impediment to the wider volunteering spirit which should be instilled and promoted. Dentists' social identification, commitment and dedication should be improved beyond provision of clinical dental services alone.

Conclusion

The act of volunteering for dentists expresses social solidarity and willingness to contribute, which should be nurtured and promoted. Sometimes this is accompanied by additional ulterior motives, which need not be neglected or ignored, as long as they potentially contribute to the overall aims. Optimal satisfaction of the volunteers should generate efficiency and success of the program. Ways of improving this satisfaction need to be addressed, explored and applied for the benefit of the health care providers and the community recipients.

References

- [1](#) Yad Sarah Guiding Vision.
Available at: <http://www.yadsarah.org.il/index.asp?id=226>
Accessed October 18, 2007.
- [2](#) Yad Sarah Dental Clinic Guiding Vision.
Available at: <http://www.yadsarah.org.il/index.asp?id=111>.
Accessed October 18, 2007.
- [3](#) Linda CN. *Geriatric Dentistry in the Next Millennium*. Gerodontology. 2000; 17(1) : 3-7.

4 4 Matear D.; Gudofsky I. Practical Issues in Delivering Geriatric Dental Care. *Journal of the Canadian Dental Association*. 1999;65; 289-291.

5 5 Meskin L.; Berg R.. Impact of Older Adults on Private Dental Practice. *Journal of the American Dental Association*. 2000;131(8); 1188-1195(8).

6 6 Wurlitzer FP, Mclvor AC. Short-term volunteer staffing of a hospital. *Southern Medical Journal*. 1996;89 (1):46-50.

7 7 Gayle Sullivan. Volunteerism and liability. *Case Manager*. 2005 ;16 (6):27-28.

8 8 Addington-Hall, Julia M, Karlson, S. A national survey of health professionals and volunteers working in volunteers' experience of working in hospices. *Palliative Medicine*. 2005;19(1):49-57(9).

9 9 Humphrey-Murto S, Wood TJ, Toychie C. Why do physicians volunteer to be OSCE examiners?. *Medical Teacher*. 2005;27(2);172-174.

10 10 Reeser JC, Berg RL, Rhea D, Willick S. Motivation and satisfaction among polyclinic volunteers at the 2002 Winter Olympic and paralympic games. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*. 2005;39:-doi:10.1136/bjism.2004.015438.

11 11 Wurlitzer F. Volunteering in West Africa. *Western Journal of Medicine*. 1991;154:730-732.

12 12 Bibeau DL, Howell KA, Rife JC, Taylor ML. The role of a community coalition in the development of health services for the poor and uninsured. *International Journal of Health Services*. 1996;26(1):93-110.

13 13 Zini A, Pietrokovsky J. Gerodontology Teaching Program at the geriatric dental clinic in Yad Sarah. *Refuat Hapeh Vehashinayim* 2006;24(4):31-34.

About the Authors

Harold D. Sgan-Cohen DMD MPH

Harold D. Sgan-Cohen DMD MPH is an Associate Professor in Public Health Dentistry at the Department of Community Dentistry, Hebrew University-Hadassah Faculty of Dental Medicine, Jerusalem. He is Director of Public Relations of the D. Walter Cohen Middle Center for Dental Education and Chief Dental Advisor to the Jerusalem Municipality.

Avraham Zini DMD MPH

Avraham Zini DMD MPH has served as the Director of Yad Sarah Dental Clinics in Israel since 2000. He is a member of the Department of Community Dentistry, Hebrew University-Hadassah Faculty of Dental Medicine, Jerusalem. He graduated Dentistry in 1989 at the Hebrew University, and is a specialist in Public Health Dentistry.

Dr. Avi Zini
Department of Community Dentistry,
Hebrew University-Hadassah School of Dental Medicine.
P.O.B. 12272, Jerusalem 91120, Israel

e-Volunteerism: The Electronic Journal of the Volunteerism Community

ISSN: 1531-3794, Copyright © 2008

Articles may not be reproduced without permission.

Energize, Inc., 5450 Wissahickon Ave., Philadelphia PA 19144

Phone: 215-438-8342, Fax: 215-438-0434,

E-mail: info@energizeinc.com Website: <http://www.e-volunteerism.com>