

Basic Skills Review, Exam now online

New online version makes review, test more accessible; four weeks vs one day for review

In a previous article this year (Issue 1) we explained the different pathways to be eligible to take Expanded Function courses. One of these is a certificate of passing the Basic Skills Exam. The Basic Skills Review is designed to prepare dental assistants for the Exam, which must be passed with a 75% to be eligible to take EFDA courses. The following is interview with Janet Sell, a dental assisting instructor at Ozarks Technical Community College, who administers the Review and Exam. This July, Janet placed the Review and Exam online, and talks about that process below. We should note that while the Review and Exam are now available online, they will continue to be offered at dental related meetings and through dates made available by assistant educators, such as Ozarks Technical College and Nichols Career Center.

FOR THOSE WHO MAY NOT KNOW, GIVE US A SUMMARY OF THE BASIC SKILLS REVIEW AND THE EXAM ONLINE PROCESS.

The course is online through Blackboard at Ozarks Technical Community College (OTC). The online review is broken down into 10 sections: Law & Ethics, General Anatomy of the Oral Cavity, Medical Emergencies in the Dental Office, Radiology, Dental Materials, Infection Control, Occupational Health & Safety, General Dental Procedures, Office Management.

In each section are Key Terms, PowerPoints and Practice Quizzes. The assistant will have to apply through OTC Continuing Education Department. They will have 4 weeks to study the review material and then this course requires the assistant to appear for a proctored assessment. The phrase "proctored exam" refers to the process of completing an exam in the presence of an approved person called a "proctor", who will verify the student's identity and monitor the exam completion process. Once the assistant passes the exam, a certificate will be sent.

The Missouri Basic Skills Mastery Exam consists of 115 multiple choice questions. The test will be timed (90 minutes) and consists of the following types of questions:

- General Chairside - 20%
- Infection Control - 30%
- Tooth Morphology / Anatomy - 20%
- Dental Materials - 10%
- Radiology - 5%
- Legal Issues / Jurisprudence - 5%

WE KNOW YOU GIVE THE EXAM AT MDA MEETINGS AND OTHER VENUES. HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THIS?

When I was hired at OTC in the Dental Assisting Program this was one of my responsibilities. The Missouri Dental Board has given the accredited dental assisting schools of Missouri the responsibility to write, update and maintain this exam. At first I just gave the test when needed. With the demand of assistants wanting to take the test, I developed a review and now have placed it online.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO PUT THE REVIEW AND EXAM ONLINE?

I developed the review and exam online for easier access and to make it more affordable. Assistants will be able to access the course at work, home, school or at a local library, and be able to take the test at any approved proctoring site (local school, library, testing centers). Most towns, big or small, will have one of these. This also will save traveling expenses and, an assistant can do it at their convenience and will not have to wait until a review and test is scheduled. This online course will be \$200 and you may incur a fee at the proctoring site (determined by site).

WHAT'S NEW, BETTER, DIFFERENT ABOUT THE ONLINE REVIEW AND EXAM?

The review is better because the student will be able to work at their own pace. Instead of sitting and listening to speakers for 4 to 6 hours in a day, they will have 4 weeks to study the material before having to take the test. The 115 questions will come from a test bank of 500 questions.

WHAT AREA OF THE REVIEW/EXAM DO YOU FIND IS MOST CHALLENGING FOR ASSISTANTS?

Typically one of the main reasons that someone may fail the test is that they do not have enough experience in the dental office before they attempt the test. This test is designed to make sure the assistant has a competency level to be able to take the Expanded Function courses.

Another challenge I see very often is fear or test anxiety. Some experienced assistants have not been in school or had to take a test for several years, and just the thought of doing it is very scary to them. I believe the online version of the exam will be less intimidating. They will have 4 weeks study and then the test will be in that same, online format.

WHAT DO YOU FEEL ASSISTANTS CAN DO TO BETTER PREPARE FOR PASSING THE EXAM?

To prepare for this exam take your time and study all the information that is provided for you online. You will have 4 weeks. This will actually be better than sitting through a review one day and then taking the test the next day. Buy the recommended book (listed on the online course site) and learn the material.

In my opinion, it is best to have at least 1 to 2 years of full-time experience in the dental office before you attempt this test. It also is helpful to form study groups. The whole office can do the review at the same time and help each other with the material, but the test is administered individually only.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO DOCTORS WHOSE ASSISTANTS ARE PREPARING TO TAKE THE REVIEW AND EXAM—WHAT CAN THEY DO TO BETTER COACH THEIR ASSISTANTS TO SUCCESS?

Work with your assistant while they are preparing for the exam. Have the office set up a study group. Have many resources (dental assisting books, review books, infection control books, different journals) in the office. Do not put too much pressure on the assistant, especially if they have not been in school for a while.

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE BIGGEST CHANGES IN ASSISTANT EDUCATION?

The biggest change in assistant education is learning online. Online learning removes the barrier of time and distance and allows you to learn while balancing a busy lifestyle with family, work and education.

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE BIGGEST CHANGES, ON THE JOB, FROM WHEN YOU WERE AN ASSISTANT IN PRACTICE TO WHAT ASSISTANTS EXPERIENCE ON THE JOB TODAY?

Today I see assistants doing more Expanded Functions in the dental practice which make the office more productive and gives the assistants a sense of value to the profession and office. Dental offices have to follow the Dental Practice Act and the assistant has to have formal education to do these specific duties. Today I believe assistants look at their jobs as a profession and career and have a desire to be able to do more in their offices; Expanded Functions gives them that opportunity.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR CAREER PATH. HOW DID YOU GET INTERESTED IN FIRST BECOMING AN DENTAL ASSISTANT AND THEN, A DENTAL ASSISTANT EDUCATOR?

My career path is very simple. After high school graduation I decided I would like to work in the dental office. I went through a dental assisting program in Kansas City, and my first job was working in Liberty with Dr. Luckana Asandra part-time. After moving to Springfield,

I started working at Parkcrest Dental Group for Dr. Bruce Ratcliff. With PDG being a group practice, I received most of my experience there which included pediatric dentistry, orthodontics, oral surgery, general dentistry and office management. I was employed at PDG for 10 years and then started working for Dr. John Heard as a Treatment Coordinator. I was with Dr. John Heard for four years when an instructor position opened at OTC. I had served on the OTC Advisory Board and have always been a member of my professional organization. I will be starting my eleventh year of teaching in the OTC Dental Programs.



Janet Sell, MA, CDA is Dental Assisting Program Director at Ozarks Technical Community College. She graduated with a certificate in Dental Assisting in Kansas City and holds an Associate of Applied Science degree from Ozarks Technical Community College and a Bachelor and Master's degree from Drury University. She is currently enrolled at Northcentral University working toward a Doctor of Education. As a CDA, she has served on many professional organizations including the Missouri Dental Assistants Association, Missouri Dental Assisting Educators Association and America Dental Educators Association. Janet has directed and participates in numerous continuing education seminars for the dental team at local and state levels. Janet also serves as a Staff Representative for the Commission on Dental Accreditation. Contact her at 417-447-8832 or sellj@otc.edu.

at a glance

✦ ABOUT BASIC SKILLS ✦

The Basic Skills Review prepares dental assistants for the Exam, which must be passed with a 75% to be eligible to take EFDA courses. The Basic Skills Certificate is one of the pathways to taking EFDA courses.

✦ ONLINE CONVENIENCE ✦

Take the review and exam entirely online: No travel required, no waiting for a course.

✦ HOW IT WORKS ✦

Students taking the online review will have 4 weeks to study the material (versus the traditional 1 day with face-to-face review). The testing portion requires the assistant to appear for a 90-minute exam at a 'proctored location' where an approved person called a 'proctor', will verify the student's identity and monitor the exam completion process.

Once the assistant passes the exam, a certificate will be sent. Proctoring sites are available at testing centers (such as Sylvan Learning), but also in most communities can include locations such as the school, library, extension offices and even banks.

**FOR QUESTIONS CONTACT JANET SELL
417-447-8832 OR SELLJ@OTC.EDU**

Like to teach?

Consider being an EFDA Trainer



Would you like to host an EFDA Clinical Lab in your office? MDA is seeking members in all areas of the state to become a HOST VENUE for the forthcoming updated EFDA program set to launch this fall.

WHAT'S REQUIRED OF HOST VENUE?

- Attend a Train the Trainer session
- Act as lead trainer for clinical course
- Have operatories to accommodate 6 to 12 assistants
- Recruit other doctors to help train at your course
- Work with the MDA to schedule a one day course at your office
- Provide minimal materials for the course (cost reimbursed by MDA)

WHAT ARE THE HOST BENEFITS?

- Earn CE credits
- Receive monetary stipend
- Help and encourage dental assistants to further their education

I'M INTERESTED, HOW DO I SIGN UP?

- Go to www.modental.org/efda to complete a 'Host Venue Application'
- Contact Mandy Lewis at 573-634-3436 or mandy@modental.org.
- Even if you have hosted a course before or expressed interest in hosting a course in the future, please complete an application to reiterate your interest in continuing with the program.

MDA staff help you through each step to ensure course success