

# Perspectives on the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine

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As the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine (AADSM) celebrates its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, some long-time AADSM members shared some of their memories and thoughts about how far the academy has come over the past 30 years.

## **AS A LONGTIME MEMBER OF THE AADSM, WHAT HAS BEING PART OF THE AADSM MEANT TO YOU?**

“Being involved in dental sleep medicine practically since its inception has been an amazing and rewarding journey. Having stumbled upon oral appliance therapy in 1991 to help solve my own snoring problem, I never expected that incident to change the course of my practice and turn dentistry from a healing art into a life-saving one.

After treating myself, I realized I could also help my patients suffering with the same conditions. Once I saw the impact I could have on a person's sleep, their health, their marriage, and their entire life, I was determined to learn as much as I could and reach out to physicians to let them know this treatment existed. This is when reality checked in. Nearly every physician I visited slammed the door on me. Without sound medical data, clinical studies, or credentials on my behalf, they were not interested.

Like many of my dental sleep medicine colleagues, I started out basically treating snoring with very little knowledge of obstructive sleep apnea. They say, "timing is everything." As luck would have it, the internet was also developing as I was delving into this new field. The Internet enabled me to search out information about oral appliances (and everything else on the planet) on a level that I had not experienced in my life until then. Remarkably, I found other dentists around North America who were pioneering this field. The Internet allowed us to share ideas and learn from each other. A few were developing their own appliances and some decided to form study clubs. Eventually, members of these study clubs organized into the Sleep Disorders Dental Society, then into the Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine, and eventually into what we now know as the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine.

Being part of the AADSM and having this

organization behind me, as well as becoming a Diplomate of the ABDSM has changed the playing field. Returning to my medical colleagues, it was as though I had transformed, in their eyes, into one of them. Doors were opening! The AADSM, along with the Diplomate status, legitimized not only me but oral appliance therapy. They were now ready to listen and refer patients.”

- Neal Seltzer, DMD, FAGD, D. ABDSM, D. ACSDD, D.ASBA (Member since 1993)

“My introduction to dental sleep medicine was a lecture given by Dr. Dennis Bailey at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (now Rutgers) during my post-grad work in orofacial pain in 1992. He talked about devices like palatal lifters and tongue retaining devices and a group called the AADSM as a source for more information. I did not attend my first national meeting until 1994, but I had already tried to use a TRD with some success on a patient. In those days, the TRD was customized with a bite registration and was the device of choice. I subsequently shifted to a number of other MADs. At that first meeting, there were maybe 200 dentists, with the focus being more commercially oriented. (“My piece of plastic is better than yours.”) That focus continued for a number of years. It has been great seeing the transformation as it has become more oriented towards a medical/scientific-based organization. After state boards, pediatric boards and orofacial pain boards, I vowed not to take another exam. I relented, however, and received my ABDSM diplomate status in 1996. I am grateful for the organization and many mentors for guiding me through this journey. Since retiring, I continue to teach this subject to physicians and dentists at various institutions and meetings. Since I was a pediatric dentist initially, I concentrate on children, adolescents and teens. My pilot study at Children’s Hospital focuses on this age group. Best wishes ASDSM for continued success.”

Sylvan Mintz, DDS, MSD, ABDSM, ABOP (Member since 1994)

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“I joined the Sleep Disorders Dental Society in 1993. This was a mom-and-pop organization of dentists interested in oral appliance therapy. I met dentists and dental specialists with enthusiasm and an eye on the future possibilities. Our organization grew slowly and became the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine (AADSM) and I became a Diplomate of the American Board of Dental Sleep Medicine (ABDSM) and the president of the ABDSM. I served as president of the AADSM twice: 2002 to 2004 and 2016 to 2018.

This journey of leading and working with dentists, inspired by a goal of learning and educating other dentists to successfully treat patients suffering with obstructive sleep apnea, gave me a vast knowledge and understanding of dental sleep medicine (DSM). I became educated about the landscape of DSM locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

I have practiced dental sleep medicine/oral appliance therapy (DSM/OAT) for 29 years while treating over 10,000 sleep apnea patients. All my patients are referred to me by physicians, and I work as a valued member of the medical team.

None of my success would have been as satisfying and stimulating without the constant connection to our AADSM and the comradery of the many wonderful dentists and staff. We are the true voice and educational arm of DSM throughout our country and the world. The AADSM has always been the catalyst for my experience, expertise, knowledge and love of DSM/OAT.”

- *Harold Smith, DDS, D.ABDSM (Member since 1993)*

## **WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY OF YOUR TIME AS AN AADSM MEMBER?**

“At the end of a long day, I was writing up a chart of a patient that I had just seen (a 50-year-old woman - let’s call her Sally) who was referred by a pulmonary sleep specialist. She was well-dressed, had an engaging personality and was concerned that her loud snoring would not allow her to date anyone. After a complete clinical exam and review of her medical records, I realized that her case was extremely complex...and I could handle it well. I chatted easily with her about the management of her case with an oral device. I answered her questions, and we commenced the treatment. Just. Like. That.

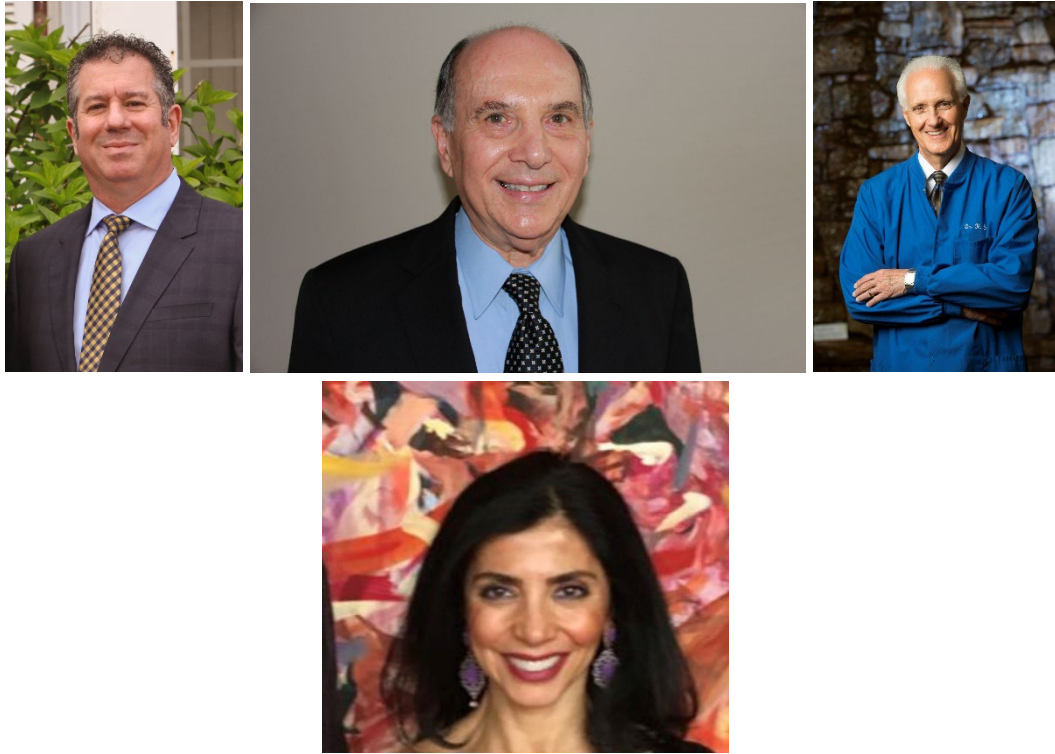
I then leaned back in my chair and smiled to myself, remembering my first sleep apnea patient. Twenty years prior, I was approached by a local physician who asked me if I did oral appliances. I brazenly assured him I did, as I had just attended my first course in oral appliance therapy. He then referred a CPAP-intolerant male patient to me. I realized how uncertain I was about managing this patient. I immediately reached out to the speaker who introduced me to what was once called the SDDS and my journey in dental sleep medicine began. That patient did fine, and I survived too!

The heartwarming memory I had of the moment I realized how far I had come, has stayed with me. It was a point in my career when I felt my competence, confidence and experience were in harmony. I shortly delivered the oral appliance to Sally and a month later she bought me homemade cookies. They were delicious, but not sweeter than the feelings of competence and accomplishment that I gained from my journey with the AADSM”

- *Leila Chahine, DMD, D.ABDSM (Member since 2000)*

## CITATION

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**TOP Left to Right: Dr. Neal Seltzer, Dr. Sylvan Mintz, Dr. Harold Smith  
BOTTOM: Dr. Leila Chahine**