

Shackelford: Dentists' unique role in national disasters

When Capt. Lee Shackelford graduated from the College of Dentistry in 1982, all he wanted to do was practice dentistry in a small town in northwest Missouri.

After five years in his rural dental practice, economic pressures led him to California where he went to work for the California Department of Corrections. There, a prison riot taught him a valuable lesson and forever changed his small-town aspirations.

When the Folsom Prison riot was quieted, one person was dead and 45 were injured. During the uprising, a Navy-trained dentist who worked at the prison "was the only person who knew what was going on and how to respond" to the urgent medical needs of inmates and staff, Shackelford said. "I decided right there I was never going to be in a position where I didn't know what to do."

From that time on, Shackelford, 52, has spent his professional career planning and preparing for emergencies. He visited his alma mater in September, spreading his message of preparedness and encouraging his dental colleagues to consider the significant role they can play to help victims in a national emergency, whether it be a natural disaster, pandemic, or terrorist attack.

He said dentists are in an ideal position to play a larger role in emergency preparedness and response, particularly in the event of a biological terrorist attack in the United States. "We have biological knowledge, we have medical knowledge, we have pharmaceutical knowledge, we

talk daily with concerned and scared people, we have the ability to handle this," he told the *Daily Nebraskan* student newspaper in an interview following his presentation at the College of Dentistry.

"In times of emergencies, when the health care system is stretched, there are things we can do to allow other medical providers to do what they are needed to do," he said later in an interview with *Cornhusker Impressions*. Dentists who are properly trained, for instance, can help with triage, vaccinations, and "counseling the worried well," he said.

He urged state licensing boards to look at these "expander" roles for dentists, citing the Illinois Dental Practice Act, which provides for a dental emergency responder certification program.

After working for California corrections, Shackelford went to work for the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, first with the Federal Bureau of Prisons and later with the Division of Immigration Health Services and the Indian Health Service. Since 2004, he has been director of the Division of Commissioned Corps Training and Career Development in the Office of the U.S. Surgeon General in Rockville, Md.

In February 2007, he became executive assistant to the Assistant U.S. Secretary of Health.

As a dentist with emergency preparedness training, Shackelford has helped triage inmates and staff members injured in prison disturbances, stitched victims' wounds, and cleaned cellblocks contami-



Captain Lee Shackelford

nated with tear gas in prison uprisings. He has extracted abscessed teeth and provided emergency pain relief for illegal aliens waiting deportation. And he has directed one of the nation's largest hospital-based clinical dental programs at the Northern Navajo Health Center in Shiprock, N.M.

Through his work with the Office of Force Readiness and Deployment, he responded as leader of an augmentation team to improve Navy and Marine dental readiness. He also supervised a medical response tent for the 2005 Presidential Inauguration and served as deputy commander of a 500-bed Federal Medical Station in Meridian, Miss.

His attraction to public health – particularly rural health – began at the College of Dentistry, he said. ❖

UNMC joins national initiative to address challenges facing dental education

The UNMC College of Dentistry is part of a national initiative to raise awareness of the challenges facing dental education in the next decade.

Dental Education: Our Legacy – Our Future has set out to help partner organizations, including the College of Dentistry, collectively raise more than \$500 million by 2014. The money is needed, according to organizers, to address challenging issues affecting dental education, including:

- Faculty shortages
- Lack of student and faculty diversity
- Aging physical and clinical facilities
- Lagging federal and state governmental support
- Escalating costs
- Access to care

"Dental education is the foundation from which all dentistry is built and sustained," said Dr. Arthur A. Dugoni, honorary chair. "It upholds the integrity of dentistry as a trusted health care profes-

sion. This national effort was created to ensure that this integrity is never compromised." Organizers said excellence in dentistry can only be sustained through "a strong dental education system."

National co-chairs of the effort are Dr. Cecile Feldman, dean of the New Jersey Dental School, and Dr. Richard Haught,



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past president of the American Dental Association. Vice chairs of the initiative's steering committee are Dr. David Johnsen, dean of the University of Iowa College of Dentistry, and Dr. Leslie W. Seldin, former ADA vice president.

In addition to raising awareness of the challenges facing dental education, this unique national effort is intended to promote a culture of philanthropy within dentistry to address these issues and to deliver a call to action to support dental education. The initiative is an awareness-raising effort and will not solicit – nor accept – any funds. Its efforts are directed at supporting its partners and enabling them to raise money efficiently and effectively.

A study conducted by the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation found that America's dental education system "faces an uncertain and perhaps tumultuous future," organizers said. "The dental profession will encounter a 'crisis' situation within the next 10 years" if financial issues confronting dental schools are not addressed. If new models of dental education and strategies are not developed, the status of dentistry as a profession will be at risk, organizers concluded. ❖