

As a dental hygienist I pride myself on upholding a standard of professionalism and integrity. Unfortunately I made a mistake and compromised that professionalism. Now I am attempting to correct my mistake and atone for my actions by continuing on with a renewed respect for the rules of my job.

When I found out about the QAP that was being instituted to ensure the competency of dental hygienists I was very concerned. I had just completed my board exam which was one of the most stressful few hours of my life. Upon learning then that I would have to re-write this exam every five years was a huge amount of pressure. Unfortunately that concern only increased when I discussed the test with other hygienists. I had originally gone to a Q and A session put on by the CDHBC which shed an extremely negative light on the test by the other people in attendance. The attitude of the other hygienists was that the test was incredibly difficult and that a large number of experienced hygienists were letting their licenses lapse and were retiring instead of writing the QAP. As a fairly new graduate this was extremely upsetting for me. These would be the people that I would turn to for advice on the job. We learn as much as we can in school but there is always a steep learning curve when you start in a real world office and having the support of experienced hygienists to turn to to ask for help would be invaluable for me. The vast majority of the people in the audience were very upset and angry by the new rules being set into place. This gave me a very negative outlook on what the test would be like and cause a lot of stress prior to taking the test which I think contributed to my lapse in judgment when writing the test.

When I wrote the QAP I was writing it in the presence of a fellow hygienist and friend of mine. We had gone through school together and were familiar with the stresses of being tested. Due to the negative reactions I had seen from other hygienists I was extremely concerned that I would not pass the test and have my license revoked. During the Q and A it was explained that if I had done poorly on the test it was a possibility that I would have an over-seeer watch me at work to determine my competency. I found this possibility very stressful being a relatively new grad. I would not know how to explain this to my employers or to patients. I thought that having a friend and other hygienist around during the writing of the test would lessen my nerves. I do realize this was against the rules. There are several notices that explain very clearly that this is not allowed and that this would be considered cheating. It was my choice to write the test in the circumstances that I did and I take full responsibility for that.

As a dental hygienist there are many stressful moments during the average work day. It was completely wrong of me to try and take the easy way out and rely on a friend for support in a confidential situation. Despite the stressed I had from what I had heard about the test prior to writing it, it is something that I should have had the constitution to deal with on my own. Our jobs are not easy and cannot be done by just anyone. Because of this we are held to a higher standard and have to work very hard to complete schooling, write a board exam, and complete additional courses and work that is deemed appropriate by the college of dental hygienists. I should not have attempted to take the easy way out. This is especially true since other people in my field wrote the test despite being just as stressed as I was and still completely the test ethically.

After writing the QAP I realised that I should not have relied on what I had heard from other people and should have experienced for myself before making the mistake of cheating. My

opinion of the QAP was very different after I had written it. I found a lot of the questions asked were things that I do deal with on a regular basis. Many questions about medications or health concerns I do see fairly often. When I was taking Client Assessment in school it was one of the hardest classes we had. There were very specific questions going into great detail about many possible medications and health concerns that patients may have. After being exposed to many more patients outside my school clinic I became much more familiar with common medications and health concerns that patients have and found the QAP to refer to those situations. Though the test is by no means easy it is very achievable to pass with enough review and work experience. I realise now that it was unnecessary to stress as much as I did and choose to write the test in an unethical manner.

As much as I was stressed about writing the test it was nothing compared to receiving the letter that I was under review for my actions. It was extremely embarrassing to realize just how wrong I had been in my actions and then have to try and explain why I had chosen to do things the way I had. My experience with the investigator was overall very good despite my embarrassment. The Inspector was very professional and made my interview as good as possible given the circumstances. Though I had made the mistake of cheating on the QAP I did try to resolve the situation as best as possible during the review process. The Inspector was very clear in her questioning and gave me the chance to explain and clarify anything that I needed to. I would like to thank her for her efforts to make that interview as painless as possible. She was very considerate of the fact that I had realised my mistake and wanted to make the situation better in any way that I could.

After completing the review process I am now "scared straight" and will not be attempting to cut any corners in the future. The overall process was very efficient and professional which I greatly appreciated due to my concern over the matter. It was a huge error on my part to cheat on the test. I think this was partly due to the fact that the QAP was relatively new and I had heard such negative things about it. Also having never written the test myself I relied too heavily on the opinions of others when I should have concentrated more on improving my own skills and knowledge rather than cheating. Hearing the opinions of others should never have had an impact on my decisions and is no excuse for the way I acted. In the future I will strive to have the fortitude and professionalism to take matters into my own hands and concern myself with only what I can do to be better and not concentrate on ways to take the easy way out.