The New York State Dental Association had a chance to sit down with new dentist member Dr. Ashley (Scofield) Mooney to discuss what it is like to be an Associate Dentist out of work during the COVID-19 pandemic. She is the current new dentist representative on NYSDA's Council on Dental Education & Licensure.

COVID-19 has brought much uncertainty and raised many questions. Where have you been getting the most up-to-date information on practicing dentistry during COVID-19?

**AM:** In addition to the ADA and NYSDA’s prospective websites and emails, I have been following the CDC, OSHA, and NYSDOH. I’ve connected on social media and tuned in to the daily videos presented by Dental Nachos as well as IgniteDDS. I have dedicated time to taking CE and participated in study clubs via ZOOM. I have even had the chance to virtually meet and communicate with local dentists prior to those meetings. There are a lot of good resources out there.

What advice do you have for fellow new dentists concerned about the aftermath of COVID-19? What is the best advice you have received?

**AM:** Right now, take one day at a time. Focus on staying safe and healthy. Know that there will always be a need for dentistry. Don’t dwell on the bad – it’s a waste of good energy. The best advice I have received is actually from an article by Paul Ollinger. It compared this time to trips that may not have gone as planned. The goal is to arrive at your final destination safely. Kindness and understanding of strangers makes those trips more manageable. During the moment, it feels so awful and terrible, but there is relief when you get to your final destination. The article can be found here: [https://forge.medium.com/to-survive-the-quarantine-change-your-metrics-e345d79be14b](https://forge.medium.com/to-survive-the-quarantine-change-your-metrics-e345d79be14b)

What challenges do you foresee when the Governor lifts restrictions?

**AM:** Initially, I believe the biggest challenge will be providers’ access to PPE. That is really an unknown challenge. A different set of fears will be brought to the dental office by patients...
and staff. That is something we will have to prepare for with education, and we will need to figure out the best way to address those fears. Some dentists are worried about having a job to return to. Practice owners have a different set of fears -- how to keep their practice alive, take care of staff, and still provide for their family. Each dentist faces unique struggles, but everyone is struggling together. Just remember -- have an open mind and maintain that to everything!

**Do you have student loans? How are you managing all of your financial obligations while out of work?**

**AM:** When I learned I wouldn’t be working, my husband and I sat down and restructured our budget. We found out my federal student loans, which luckily I have, would be eligible for adjustment. We planned and shifted our priorities. Food, shelter, and utility bills are the main focus. As a young couple, we also watch Dave Ramsay for financial advice.

**What is the most frustrating thing as a New Dentist right now?**

**AM:** For me, it is to see and hear people disobeying the stay-at-home order and protesting NYS on PAUSE. I totally understand circumstances are not ideal. As healthcare providers, we have patients we want to get back to and public health to be concerned about. We need to reduce the spread and stay healthy to do that. Respect, patience, and understanding goes a long way. It is more than just dentists who want to get back to work. We need to listen to leadership and follow guidelines to be able to get back to work safely and as quick as possible.

**What are you most excited to do when NYS is able to return to normal operations?**

**AM:** I am most excited to meet and hold my newborn niece! I also can’t wait to see my grandparents, have brunch with friends, and go to live events like a 5k race or concert. Of course, I also can’t wait to see my patients and get back to doing what I love.

Dr. Ashley (Scofield) Mooney is a 2017 graduate of the University at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine. She is currently an associate at a large group private practice in Rochester, NY. She was a member of ASDA while in dental school and has been active in organized dentistry ever since.