

**A PENNY SAVED  
IS  
A PENNY EARNED**



**... AND YOU'LL FIND THOSE SAVINGS REALLY  
ADD UP WHEN  
YOU SHOP AT The Carolina Times ADVERTISERS**

**MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS**

**Martin County's New Health Care Practice Provides Hope for The Future**



**PLANNING MEETING** — Members of Martin County Community Action, Inc. discuss operations at the NHSC practice in Jamesville. l-r are Willis Williams, Vice Chairman; Dallas Lyons; Ben Jones, Jr., Postmaster in Merry Hill; N.W. Slade, Chairman; Mrs. Doris Wallace, Treasurer; Mrs. Milmer Williams; Haywood Harris, Executive Director, and Dr. Terry Wallace.



**CHECK-UP** — Dr. Wallace gives a check-up, while Mrs. Delois Langford assists

**Photos and Feature**

By **KELVIN A. BELL**, Assisted By **EVELYN SHELLEY (NCHMDP)**

When we arrived at 11:00 the waiting room of this National Health Service Corps (NHSC) practice in Jamesville was already full. Young and old alike waited for the opportunity to be seen by the dentist, one of the six in the county, but the only black dentist in the region.

They came for treatment from as close as down the road or as far away as Hampton, Virginia. They came, as did we, in the pouring rain.

While we waited for a moment's word with Dr. Terry Wallace, one man came out of the operating area smiling; thanking the receptionist for the opportunity to come. It was rather striking to see such an atmosphere where blacks and whites waited patiently and happily for the chance to get in—we didn't understand why until we talked with the dentist.

The 1977 graduate of the Howard University Dental School was smiling a warm friendly smile when we entered the operating area. The onslaught of patients eagerly seeking his assistance had caused him to forget that we were coming. He showed us to a room where we could work and talk while he scuttled from one treatment room to another taking care of the business for which he had returned to the county.

Dr. Wallace is "particularly concerned about the size of the cavities in children under age three."

Problems such as these are causing a need for major endodontic work at a young age.

Suggesting that children be brought to the dentist before they are three years old, Wallace says that regular fluoride treatments would save money and cavities. However, he cautioned that "if they go home and don't pick up the toothbrush, then they're still in trouble because of the plaque and the germs."

Contrary to much of what is believed of dentists, this dentist relates quite well with his patients and the rapport that he has established is helping to get health care to a greater number of people in the area.

Dr. Wallace felt an obligation to return to his community to help the people with whom he was raised. This he does. Other dentists would only have seen many of them on an emergency, if at all. But the way he treats them and educates them, the practice sponsored by Martin County Community Action, Inc., will continue to grow.

Martin County Community Action, Inc. (MCCA) was the applicant organization for the NHSC primary care program, and as such provided the facilities; oversees the management of specific functions; hires and supervises support personnel, and evaluates and monitors the ongoing practice.

The NHSC on the other hand, provides continuing medical education; pays a salary to the dentist, and assists the community organization and the assignee in managing the practice and solving problems that arise.

**STATE**

Though minorities comprise approximately 25 percent of the State's population, less than two percent of the physicians and dentists are minorities. With fewer than 150 black physicians, the black physician-population ratio is about 1:8,000 while that of the Indian physician population is about 1:15,000.

The statistics for minority dentists reflects an even more critical situation. With fewer than seventy black dentists practicing in the State the ratio is about 1:18,000. Nearly half of these are nearing retirement age. And though North Carolina has the fifth largest Indian population in the nation (nearly 50,000) there are no Indian dentists currently practicing in the state.

**OPPOSITION**

There has been much opposition to the placement of a National Health Service Corps dentist in Martin County, as well as in Granville County, where another such practice has, more recently, opened. The primary source of this opposition has, surprisingly, come from two of North Carolina's dental societies—the Fifth District Dental

**NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE CORPS**

Set up to administer the Emergency Health Personnel Act of 1970, the basic purpose of the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) program is to redistribute scarce health manpower resources into shortage areas until such time as the educational system brings production into line with needs and demands.

Not intended to create long-term federal dependency for health services, the intent is the introduction of a small number of scarce health professionals to stimulate local community development around health. This development includes the setting up of linkages for the primary health care team, outside the community; resource development to provide a facility, equipment, supplies, and complementary staff, and local consumer education around health issues.

The NHSC subscribes to the World Health Organization definition of health as "complete physical, mental, and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity", and as such there are several client levels to which this applies. These include: the individual, the family or household, and the community in which the individuals and families live.

Any community in the country can request to be certified as a critical health manpower shortage area. Anyone can make that request on behalf of a community as the same procedural response is given to a post card from a private citizen as a thick proposal from a State planning agency. Though the initial applicant may be anyone, at the time of assignment of personnel to a community, the official applicant must be a non-profit incorporated organization.

After certification as a critical shortage area, personnel are recruited and placed for these areas. Primary consideration in this placement is on professional categories such as physicians, dentists, and nurses.

Concerned with the effectiveness and longevity of the assigned personnel, NHSC specifically considers assignee preferences (i.e., urban/rural, professional expectations, attitudes about communities and health, and many others including personal considerations important to the assignees and their families) before making a decision. Of equal concern is the consideration of the community needs and expectations.

Society headed by Dr. Wayne C. Anderson of Jacksonville, and the North Carolina Dental Society headed by Dr. Harold E. Maxwell in Fayetteville. (The Old North State Dental Society, under the director of Dr. Curtis Bowers, of Chapel Hill has been an avid supporter.)

"We have given a considerable amount of thought and research to your request [for certification of need]" began a letter from the Fifth District Dental Society to Haywood Harris, Executive Director of Martin County Community Action, Inc.

"This letter is to indicate that we feel that Martin County is not a shortage area and we hereby wish to 'inform you,'" the letter continued, "that the Society does not feel that Martin County should be qualified as an area for the placement of a NHSC dentist."

The HEW criterion of a dentist population ratio of 1:5000 (since lowered to 1:4500) for a declared shortage area was their justification. At the time the ratio was "1:4979", according to the letter.

There was no indication of the type of health care being given to what segment of the population, in the letter from their president.

**QUESTION OF NEED?**

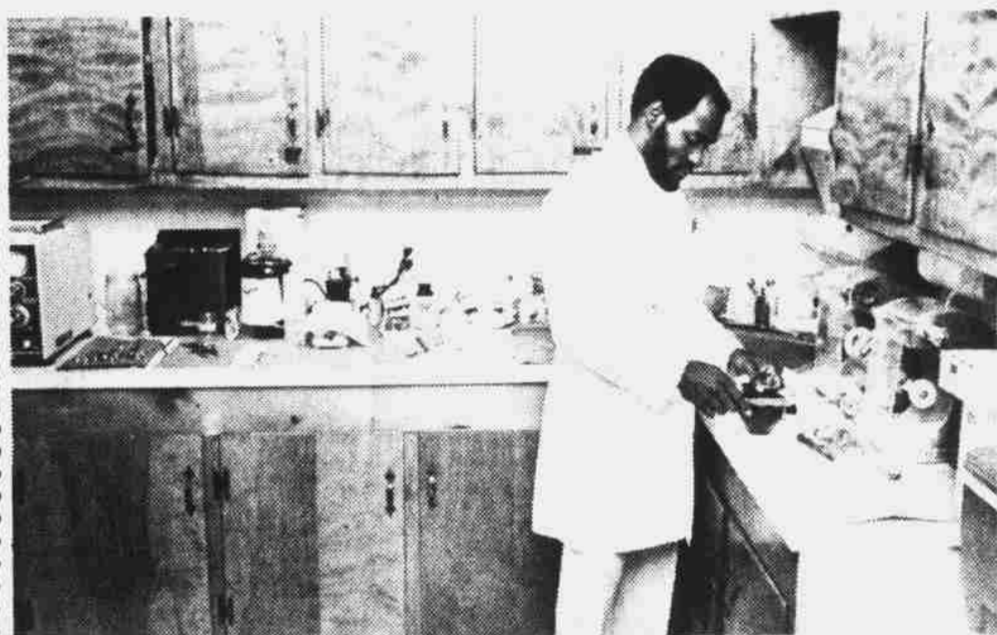
"You'll always get the discrepancy between dentists as to the need for additional dentists in an area," said Dr. Edward Price, whose six year old practice handled about eight patients per day during the first 3-4 months. By the end of the year that average had risen to 10-11 per day.

Dr. Price noted a recent ADA (American Dental Association) article which pointed out "that only half of the people (in the U.S.) went to dentists in the last twelve months—but that 85% of the population has dental problems—so you see that there is some discrepancy." He continued by saying that "this may be due to economic, social or other reasons." With his hygienist, Dr. Price now averages about 24 patient visits per day.

The comments we received from the dentists in the county did vary quite a bit—from the "I don't



**ASSISTING WITH RECEPTION** — While receptionist Ms. Glenda McEachern was out is dental assistant Delois Langford.



**MIXING** — Wallace prepares material to make a gum impression for dentures.

know what to say about it," of Dr. E.K. Wright, Jr. to that of Dr. William H. Gray, a veteran of more than 25 years of dental service in the County, who said "I think we have enough dentists in the County to take care of the County."

The latter indicated that there was already an "over-supply of dentists" in the area. When asked about patients on Medicare or Medicaid, his indignation further surfaced as he refused to provide information as to how many patients he sees or exactly how long he had been in practice. "We had already been informed that he and his staff handled about fifty patients per day including his nine regular appointments and "work-in" time.

Other comments from county dentists included those of Dr. David Marshburn, an eleven year veteran of the area who said he really didn't know that much about the Jamesville practice, but that it "hasn't made any difference in my practice."

"Sure, it will serve a need in the community" he said in responding to that question. However, he was quick to add that he thought that the "amount of work that he does is sort of slow." According to Dr. Marshburn, he averaged 10-15 patients per day during his first two years, but that with the current office staff of ten girls (including five dental assistants and two hygienists) he now averages between fifty and sixty patients per day.

Citing that his original objection as based on the placement of a NHSC practice in Robersonville, which he felt could have crippled his practice which opened there in August, 1976, Dr. Henry A. Kearney III said "I haven't really thought about it since then." Having already pointed out that during the first 28 weeks of his practice, he saw an average of eight patients per day, Dr. Kearney says that depending upon what he is doing, he now averages between 8-10 patients per day.

Serving a designated area which includes parts of some fifteen counties and two-thirds of their county seats, Dr. Terry Wallace, in his six-month old NHSC practice in Jamesville, is already averaging at least 15 patients per day and is already booked into June. Apparently there is a rather great need being filled by this practice.

In response to a request for a waiver of the certification of need by local and state dental societies, Assistant Surgeon General Edward D. Martin wrote, "In as much as 45 per cent of the critical dental shortage areas in the United States are in Region IV, the waivers are both appropriate and commendable in responding to community needs."

**SERVICE AREA**  
"Community needs" as it refers to Dr. Martin's statement and HEW directives would include eleven of the more than 55 North Carolina counties pre-

viously designated by HEW as being "critical dental shortage areas".

Cavities and Pyrrhea (a gum disease) are listed as the fifth and sixth most prevalent health care problem in the area—behind hunger and malnutrition, high blood pressure, high risk pregnancy, and ulcers. With a median age of about 27, education coupled with dental health care that Dr. Wallace is providing will ensure that the dental health of the area will increase as does the age of its population. Lectures on proper dental care, which have been given by Dr. Wallace, have already shown significant results.

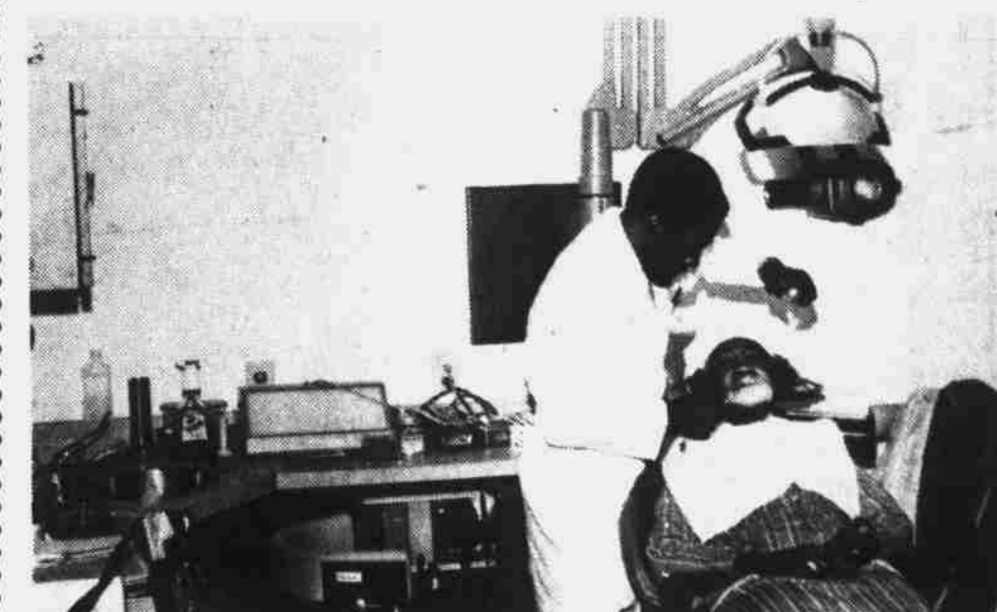
What is evident is that in the past, patients (residents of the county) have gone to dentists only in the event of emergency (i.e. toothache), and that there has been little or no education as to proper oral maintenance.

"This is one of the most prolific problems in the area," pointed out Dr. Wallace. Patients have not been taught how to appropriately care for their teeth. Therefore their past visits to the dentists have been basically a "removal" type situation—merely treatment of the problem and not the causes...

What is evident is that in the past patients have gone to the dentist only in the event of an emergency—perhaps now that will change—at least for those fifteen counties and the host of communities which this practice serves.



**WAITING FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEE THE DENTIST**



**DR. WALLACE CHECKS PATIENT'S DENTAL PROBLEM**