

Julie Frey: **What about the increase in autonomy of [dental hygienists](#)?**

John Bitting: This is a great question because when I go in front of dental boards to ask them to promulgate sensible sedation regulations, I inevitably overhear them discussing new [dental hygienist](#) regulations because [hygienists](#) are gaining more and more autonomy. They're allowed to do more and more procedures. For instance, they are more increasingly allowed to do local anesthesia and in some states, they're allowed to administer local anesthesia even outside the presence of the [dentist](#).

The State of California, in fact, has its own [hygienist](#) board now. It's the first state, and so far the only one, to do that, and it won't be the last either. I think here in the State of Washington, you'll see the hygienists eventually have their own board and it will start popping up in state dental boards around the country. **You'll have separate hygienist boards.** They're very well organized and they're getting more autonomy. They're allowed to do more and more procedures, sometimes without the dentist even being in the office. It's one of the fastest growing parts of the healthcare profession along with nursing, and you'll see more hygienists out there. As they say, the dentist is only as good as his team, so they will have a positive future, I see.