Minnesota’s Dental Therapist Workforce, 2013
In 2009, Minnesota became the first state in the U.S. to authorize the licensing of dental therapists and the certification of advanced dental therapists. These new professions practice as part of a dental team to provide educational, clinical and therapeutic services, including non-complicated restorations and extractions. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), in collaboration with the Minnesota Board of Dentistry, collects information on the demographics, education, location and future plans of dental therapists licensed in Minnesota. This fact sheet is based on a survey of the dental therapists licensed as of August 2013. The survey had a response rate of 81 percent. For more on this profession as it is emerging in Minnesota, see Early Impacts of Dental Therapists in Minnesota, a joint report to the Minnesota Legislature from the BOD and MDH.

Overall
As of August 2013, there were 27 dental therapists licensed in Minnesota, three of whom were also certified as advanced dental therapists.1

Gender, Race and Ethnicity
The majority of dental therapists (93 percent) were female. Most (75 percent) identified their race as White. Ten percent of the dental therapists identified themselves as Asian, and five percent of the remaining dental therapists identified themselves as African-American, Multiracial or Other. Ten percent of the dental therapists identified themselves as Hispanic.

Age
Based on license information, 59 percent (13) of the dental therapists were under age 35 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Age of Minnesota's dental therapists (N=22)

Source: BOD and MDH

Geographic Distribution
Nearly two-thirds (73 percent) of the state’s dental therapists worked in clinics located in the seven-county Twin Cities Metropolitan Area (Figure 2). The remaining third (27 percent) worked in Greater Minnesota.

Figure 2. Distribution of dental therapists (N=22)

Source: BOD and MDH

Training and Education
At the time of initial licensure, all of Minnesota’s dental therapists had received degrees from either the University of Minnesota (59 percent) or Metropolitan State University (41 percent). When initially licensed, 82 percent of DTs had received a Master’s of Science degree, while 18 percent held a Bachelor’s of Science degree.
Practice Settings and Activities
Of the 27 Minnesota-licensed dental therapists in August 2013, 24 were actively employed as dental therapists in the state.

Half of Minnesota dental therapists worked in nonprofit clinic settings, while a third worked in either solo or small private practices. The balance worked in hospital or academic settings (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Primary work settings for MN dental therapists (N=22)

Source: MDH Health Care Workforce Survey

Dental therapists reported working an average of 27 hours a week. The proportion of respondents who worked 32 or more hours was 63 percent, while the proportion who worked fewer than 32 hours a week was 38 percent.

Most dental therapists would like to practice more hours than they are currently. When the respondents were asked how many hours they would like to work, the average response was 35 hours a week.

When asked to break down how their time was spent practicing as a dental therapist, the average proportion of time spent on patient care was 82 percent. Dental therapists spent 11 percent of their time on patient charting, 7 percent on teaching, 5 percent on consulting with clinic staff and 2 percent on administrative functions.

Seven (32 percent) of the dental therapists who were also licensed dental hygienists reported performing dental hygiene services during their employment as a dental therapist, at an average of 5.6 hours per week.

The majority (81 percent) of the dental therapists reported supervising at least one dental assistant.

Forty-one percent spent time volunteering in the last 12 months.

Notes
1 As of March 2014, 41 dental therapists were licensed in Minnesota, six of whom were also certified as advanced dental therapists. In addition, five dental therapy students are expected to graduate from Metropolitan State University in the spring of 2014, and nine dental therapy students are expected to graduate from the University of Minnesota in December 2014.

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