

Dec 9, 2008

Re: Oral Health practitioner Legislation

Dear Respected Colleague,

As an interested party in the upcoming proposed legislation regarding the establishment of a new member of the oral healthcare team I would like to share my perspectives. My perspective is based upon my 18 years teaching many of the irreversible dental procedures proposed for this new practitioner, review of published materials in the field and first hand exposure to similar efforts around the world. Additionally I have 4 years experience teaching dental implant techniques nationwide and years of dental practice in MN.

**In establishing a new dental health provider it is essential that this individual be educated at an institution experienced in teaching the irreversible dental techniques that this individual will be asked to perform safely and effectively for patients.**

The instruction of students in the permanent removal of tooth structure and consequent replacement of missing tooth structure with restorative materials requires an expertise that is difficult to find in today's world. The uncompromised commitment to both the development of the student and the quality of the outcome that protects all future patients places an unusual combination of stress on those responsible for this type of educational endeavor. A thorough understanding of tooth morphology, oral physiology, dental restorative materials, dental occlusion and pulpal vitality are all prerequisite to a quality outcome. Developing the knowledge base and then developing and nurturing the hand skills that allow for consistent accuracy measured in the fraction of millimeters requires educators that have developed, monitored and evaluated dental technical skills over extended periods of time.

Although I felt I had a very good understanding of this concept before, it was dramatically reinforced upon my visit to the University of Otago in New Zealand. New Zealand has approximately 80 years experience in the education of Dental Therapists. More recently, modifications have been made in the education of dental therapists. When asked for a rationale for these changes a direct reason was stated by a dental therapist with over 40 years experience in providing direct patient care and teaching. To paraphrase, she stated *that the opportunity for new dental therapy students to reap the full benefits of experienced educators expert in their fields can only be achieved at the University.* After watching her interact with a very difficult young patient this very gifted and talented educator went on to say *that you must be cautious to stay within the limits of a very carefully restricted scope of practice that both benefits and protects our young patients. We can't teach everything in such a short period. It is imperative that we teach our young students how to utilize the dentist director as an advisor and colleague.*

The University of Minnesota School of Dentistry is the only institution in Minnesota that has the experience in teaching these irreversible dental techniques and is the only institution that has earned national accreditation in the teaching of these techniques to dental students.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Madden DDS  
6309 Tingdale Ave  
Edina MN 55439