

50 East McAndrews Road • Burnsville, MN 55337  
Phone 952-892-5050

September 22, 2008

Dr. Joan Sheppard, DDS, Chair  
Oral Health Practitioner Work Group  
Minnesota Department of Health  
625 N. Robert St., P.O. Box 64975  
St. Paul, Minnesota, 55164-0975

RE: The Dental School should not be endorsing the proposed Oral Health Practitioner.

Dear Doctor Sheppard:

This is my third letter in a series of five that I am planning to write to the Oral Health Practitioner ("OHP") Work Group. In this particular letter I am going to discuss my concern about how the number of dentists graduating from the Minnesota School of Dentistry are affecting patient care in Minnesota. I will also comment as to how this problem could be applied towards the Minnesota Legislature's mandate to develop a plan to meet the needs of the under served in Minnesota.

To begin with, I would like to ask the work group members whether or not they believe a society will tolerate dental health care services being done on individuals when the services are probably unnecessary? I think not.

As a general dentist of 42 years, I have been witnessing more and more dental work being done on patients that is not needed. One particular case I came across was so flagrant that it was reported directly to the Minnesota Board of Dentistry. Many of my colleagues are also seeing this sort of thing. It's a shame, but these dentists will tell you that they are only doing preventive dentistry.

Obviously dentists need to pay their bills too, but when there is a shortage of paying patients, dentists will simply do work that does not necessarily have to be done at the time. Often times it can be work that does not have to be done at all, and this is not just associated with general dentists, the specialists are doing this also. It appears to me that the State could turn this unfortunate dilemma into a win, win situation by finding a way to use licensed dentists to offset the alleged need for providers to treat the under served.

The number of dentists graduating from the Minnesota School of Dentistry, each year, is proportional to the current imbalance of the dentist to patient ratio. As a practicing dentist, I am concerned that this scenario, if left unchallenged, will reverse the established trustworthy reputation of dentists that the Profession has maintained over the years.

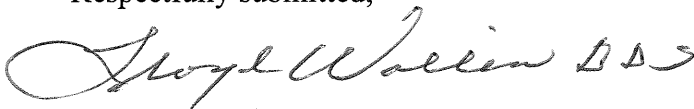
Dr. Joan Sheppard  
September 22, 2008  
Page 2.

We all know that there is no real shortage of dentists in Minnesota. This is especially true in our metropolitan areas. Yet, a few politicians continue to preach of a vast population of under served dental patients in our State. They are very wrong, especially when they cannot even define what "under served" means. I submit that this so-called "under served population" is nothing more than a group of people who are more **under willing to pay** for their dentistry than **under served**.

Most private practice dentists, including myself, are having a lot of open chair time these days. This is simply because of the increased competition due to too many dentists graduating from our dental school. Many older dentists are continuing to practice well into their seventies. We all know that experience is a dentist's greatest asset, and I believe it should never be wasted. Many dentists I know, including myself, are ready and willing to do the work of the proposed OHP, but of course better funding has to be worked out, as does an overall treatment plan. I am planning to address these particular issues in my next letter.

In closing, I again wish to thank the Work Group for giving me the opportunity to contribute to the group's thoughts on the matter of the proposed, but definitely not yet approved, oral health practitioner program. Lest we forget, after all of the dialogue for and against this matter, please keep in mind that the bottom line is the safety of the patient. Four years of dental school following four years of undergraduate study does not really equate to a single year of "training" that some people want to give to the dental hygienist that may, and the key word is "may," want to work as an OHP.

Respectfully submitted,



Lloyd Wallin, DDS  
Past MDA Trustee from the Saint Paul District.

LAW/

Enclosure

CC: Mr. Bill Prentice