

04 March 2021

To the House Health Care Committee for the State of Oregon:

As a member of the National Coalition of Dentists for Health Equity I write to support the passage into law of Oregon's Dental Therapy Bill (HB 2528).

I have practiced general dentistry for more than 40 years. I began my professional career in Appalachian Kentucky. It was obvious then that the availability of dental services was insufficient to attend to the hard tissue dental disease management needs of the region. This circumstance remains largely unchanged. Edentulism for those under 30 years of age was common. Effective, non-surgical dental disease management was, in general, absent. The first visit for most of those living in that time and place was for emergency dental services. And, it was not uncommon for the next visit, perhaps after years, to be for the same.

I have practiced in the Federal Health Care System for 30 years and for those presenting at risk it is also obvious that 2 or so hours of occasional contact with the providers of a traditional dental practice leaves many at risk to the damages caused by continuing, unmanaged disease.

Organized dentistry, seen as associations and societies, has not met the challenges of serving those who are often, more in need of services and care. Occasional, irregular, episodic responses to emergent needs with limited to no follow-on care is the ongoing legacy of non-response evidenced over more than four decades.

The people living in a world of dental services inequity, very profoundly, need the care provided by dental therapists. To declare that a prospective dental patient with limited access to any form of care is better off being ignored and uncared for as opposed to being educated and clinically supported as they begin to understand the requirements of effective disease management is quite honestly, sub-ethical.

Protocols describing non-surgical or minimally invasive dental disease management are not and will not become the primary treatment planning guides for dentists in this country. Conversely, these protocols are foundational to the work of dental therapists.

Please consider the program of the venerable Hinman Dental Meeting, held in Atlanta, GA and scheduled for this weekend. This meeting's course offerings include treating sleep apnea, botox and dermal filler training (3 sessions), how to "wow" every patient every time and dental implant supported restorations (often those primarily necessary because of earlier failures of disease management).

Oregon, please see that this must change. You have a truly significant opportunity today. Dentistry likes to use the word *precision* to describe its current way forward. Please understand that this means less access to the underserved. It is the equivalent of serving desert to the overfed while those without and standing just on the other side of the window, continue to suffer from malnutrition.

Thank you,

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