

Submitter: Kari Hiatt

Committee: House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2996

I oppose House Bill 2996. This bill would eliminate the written examination requirement (RHS) for dental assistants to earn a radiological proficiency in the state of Oregon.

Dental assistants are trained in different environments – some dental assistants go to school, some are trained on the job. Schooling for dental assistants can vary in length from as short as a 10-week program to a more comprehensive 9 + month program with more than 100 hours of learning devoted to radiology. Passing the RHS exam sets a minimum standard to for candidates of all background to meet in order to earn the radiological proficiency credential. If this requirement is removed, then what will replace the exam as the new standards? If standards for dental assistant education are lowered, the quality of dental assistants will also be affected.

Taking diagnostic quality dental radiographs is one of the most important skills of a dental assistant. Dental assistants need both knowledge and hands-on training to build their “toolbox” of different techniques, modifications, and general practices. Below are just a few examples of how the knowledge covered in the RHS exam applies to dental assistants.

- Patients often ask dental assistants how x-rays are produced and dental assistants are able to explain the inner workings of the x-ray machine to the patient. **(Radiation Safety, X-ray Production)**
- Assistants need to be able to explain what images the dentist has prescribed and give rationale for the exposures **(Purpose and Technique)**
- Assistants should be able to troubleshoot, independently, how to take an image on a patient who has a shallow palate or another anatomical anomaly or clinical condition. **(Purpose and Technique)**
- A dental assistant is able to change the exposure settings for each radiograph that is taken on a patient. Changing the exposure settings based on the area being exposed demonstrates the application of the ALARA principle. **(Radiation Safety)**
- How to evaluate images for diagnostic quality. The test covers what is acceptable coverage in intraoral and extraoral exposures. For example, it is important that dental assistants are able to accurately assess if a periapical image has 2-3 mm around the apex (apicies) of the tooth being exposed. **(Purpose and Technique)**
- How to self-protect as an operator. As a dental assistant, I take dental images nearly every day under general supervision. Nobody is watching me to make sure that I’m standing behind a protective barrier, at an angle from the Tubehead, and at least 6 feet away from the radiation source. **(Radiation Safety)**
- Infection control. If I drop the receptor holder on the floor, do dental assistants know what to do in order to prevent cross contamination? **(Infection Control)**

I urge this committee to oppose this bill. The system that is currently in place works for Oregon and removing this exam would be a disservice.

Very Respectfully,

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