



CONNECTICUT DENTAL HYGIENISTS' ASSOCIATION, INC.
ADVOCATES FOR ORAL HEALTH MANAGEMENT



“The mission of the Connecticut Dental Hygienists’ Association Inc. is to represent the interests of dental hygienists and support the advancement of the dental hygiene profession by promoting the highest clinical, educational and ethical standards and be advocates for the public’s total health through prevention and access to quality care.”

Testimony to: Senator Terry Gerratana, Representative Susan Johnson, and the Members of the Public Health Committee

In Opposition to: Raised Bill 993

Submitted by: Marcia H. Lorentzen, RDH, MSED, Ed.D.
March 15, 2013

Senator Gerratana, Rep. Johnson, and Members of the Public Health Committee:

I speak in opposition to SB 993, An Act Concerning Dental Assistants and Expanded Function Dental Auxiliary (EFDA), **in its present form**. I would like to **amend SB993** to include the Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner (ADHP), a dental hygiene mid-level provider, as was stated in the 2012 HB 5541, in order to address access to care. The ADHP as licensed professional will work as a member of an integrated healthcare team, alongside hygienists, dentists and their assistants in the public health programs currently in operation in Connecticut.

As Dean of the Fones School of Dental Hygiene, University of Bridgeport, I can assure you that we are fully committed to fulfill the Master’s Degree educational plan designed to educate and graduate licensed and qualified candidates for this mid-level oral health practitioner. The ADHP curriculum will prepare practitioners to address special oral health needs of priority populations including children, elderly, adults, and those with special needs who will be served in public health settings. The ADHP will be a new member of the oral health team who works in collaboration with dentists, not independent from them, to offer more complete array of dental services to more CT residents.

The Advanced Dental Therapist of Minnesota has shown success in providing more care to more people for less cost, especially for public programs. The mid-level provider, graduated with a Master of Science in Advanced Dental Therapy (MSADT), *formerly known as the Master of Science in Oral Health Care Practitioner (MAOHCP)*, treats patients/clients with primary and secondary preventive treatment, through a collaborative arrangement with a dentist. **Although Minnesota calls the new midlevel provider an Advanced Dental Therapist**, it is actually quite similar in curriculum and scope of practice to the proposed CT ADHP. I encourage you to visit this link for an up-to-date view on the success of the ADT in Minnesota.

<http://www.metrostate.edu/msweb/explore/gradstudies/masters/msadt/>

The proposed Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner elevates the strong medical and dental hygiene education within the evidenced-based foundation of the licensed associate degree dental hygienist and the advanced critical thinking, broad-based baccalaureate degree education. The proposed curriculum is tailored to position the midlevel provider in a collaborative position with the dentist to extend care to patients who need it. The career ladder, as it is sometimes referenced, allows those dental hygienists who want it to move forward in their career. Entering into the MSDH curriculum as a baccalaureate degree educated, experienced, licensed dental hygienist is **a logical progression** for advanced dental hygiene practice, expanding the scope of practice commensurate with the proposed educational curriculum. Education of dental hygienists at the Master’s Degree level is being reported by those employing ADTs in Minnesota to be the preferred model. They have the foundation and licensure to continuing with preventive and enter into palliative and restorative care as required by the patient/client. The Advanced Dental

Therapists have **compassion for working within the dental health care system to offer more care to the people they see.**

When ADHP was discussed in hearing last year questions surrounding accreditation standards for a mid-level provider. This may be answered now: the Commission on Dental Accreditation has been working on the proposed standards for the past 18 months and has approved a draft of Accreditation Standards for Dental Therapy Education Programs.* The draft is being distributed to appropriate communities of interest for review and comment with comment due by December 1, 2013. The following Standards are addressed in the draft: **1. Institutional Effectiveness; 2. Educational program; 3. Faculty and Staff; 4. Educational Support Services; and 5. Patient Care Services.** *http://www.ada.org/sections/educationAndCareers/pdfs/proposed_dental_therapy.pdf

Another question was asked regarding testing for competence of the new midlevel provider. Graduates of Advanced Dental Therapy programs in Minnesota are required to pass a clinical examination based on the examination taken by dental students and conducted by the Central Regional Testing Service (CRDTS). This is a testing agency akin to the North East Regional Board (NERB) conducted in Connecticut. Examiners are unaware as to which patients are treated by a dental student or an ADT student. This **validates that in the defined scope of practice, ADTs are educated to the level of a dentist.**

Associate degree students provide more than 500 hours of clinical care to patients who present with complex medical issues for which dental hygiene students must conduct an extensive medical history with the patient, often involving the need to consult with a medical doctor. Patients benefit from a thorough review of medical conditions and oral health assessments, education, and preventive treatment, but they have limited if any access for treatment of their dental disease. Individuals come to Fones clinic to receive dental hygiene services at very low cost; additionally, patients are specifically referred to the clinic from local dental offices and community health centers to receive more extensive periodontal cleanings and x-rays due to the exemplary care students and faculty deliver at low cost. And in our economy, there will be more unmet care due to financial restraints. The **ADHP has the potential to serve citizens with unmet needs and extend health care to populations with limited access.**

The curriculum for the ADHP is designed to build upon the Accreditation Standards of the entry-level dental hygienist and extend the body of knowledge and competencies inherent in the baccalaureate degree education. Areas of concentration in the Master's Degree Advanced Practitioner Program include focus in areas included in a dental education: **dental clinical sciences, community based patient care, general and oral pathology, periodontics, pharmacology, oral diagnosis and treatment planning, dental public health and special needs, dental emergencies, and anesthesiology/pain control.** The difference between the ADHP curriculum and the dental education is in the number of clock hours based on the intended scope of practice.

Please support language that will **allow dental hygienists who have the requisite academics to enter into training and education, and succeed in earning this advanced degree in order to reach communities in need.**

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