Mythbusting

Alaska DHAT

Mary Williard, DDS
North Dakota Oral Health Summit
Ramkota Hotel, Bismarck, ND
August 1, 2016
Disclaimer

I have no conflicts of interest nor am I providing any endorsement of products.

And...
Photo BY JAMES HIBBERD • @JAMESHIBBERD
Entertainment Weekly
Do you know any dental therapy myths?
Myths:

• We don’t need to change how dentistry is delivered in the US.
• Those who want care can access it.
• We just have a maldistribution of dentists.
• If Medicaid would just pay more, more dentists would accept it.
Spirit Lake Pediatric Dental Day


Pediatric Dentistry Today, AAPD
March 2012 Volume XLVIII Number 2
By Jan Silverman
History of Dental Caries in Alaska Native People

- Archeological records show caries rate of ~1%
  - 1925
  - Studies show lowest caries rate in the world

- Improved air transportation and dietary changes
  - 1928 – 1930’s
  - 1984
  - 1999
  - Present

- Present
  - Still the same after all these years

- 1928 – 1930’s
  - Prevalence of dental caries in children 2x same aged U.S. children

- 1984
  - Vast majority of children have dental caries

- 1999
52 million Americans did not access a dentist in the past year- our system is broken.

AI/AN adult dental patients suffer disproportionately from untreated dental caries, with twice the prevalence of untreated caries as the general U.S. population and more than any other racial/ethnic group. *

*IHS Data Brief, March 2016, Results of the 2015 IHS Oral Health Survey Drs. Phipps and Ricks
Dental Therapists: A Definition

Primary oral health care professionals

- Basic clinical dental treatment and preventive services
- Multidisciplinary team members
- Advocate for the needs of clients
- Refer for services beyond the scope of the dental therapist’s practice.*

*SAKATCHEWAN DENTAL THERAPISTS ASSOCIATION

WK Kellogg Foundation,
DHAT Scope of Practice
2 year educational program

Diagnosis and Treatment Planning, Prevention, Basic Hygiene, Radiographs, Infection Control, Restorative, Pediatric, Urgent Care, Extractions, Community Projects, Clinic Management, Equipment Repair and Maintenance, Referral Process

- All ages
- General Supervision
- Part of a team of dental and medical providers
Myths:

Dental therapists are going to be practicing independently with minimal education!

Dental therapists wouldn’t be able to manage a medical emergency in the operatory

Dental therapist will harm their patients when things like a root tip breaks off
FACTS:

• Dental therapists take the same American Heart Association Provider course as dentists.

• Dental therapists malpractice= $100-150/year
• Dentist malpractice= $500-1500/year

• 10 years of DHAT practice in AK, no reports of patient harm
How Supervision of a DHAT Works

- Education
- Communication
  - Telehealth
- Teamwork
- Regulations

DHAT Ben Steward in pre-clinical lab with mock Telehealth case on monitor
DHAT as part of a dentist led team

Regional Hub Clinic
-Supervising Dentist
-Hygienist
-EFDHA
-PDHA
-DHAT

Subregional Clinic
-DHAT
-PDHA

Subregional Clinic
-DHAT
-PDHA

Village Clinic
-DHAT
-PDHA

Village Clinic
-PDHA

Village Clinic
-PDHA

Village Clinic
-PDHA

Village Clinic
-PDHA

Village Clinic
-PDHA

Village Clinic
-PDHA
Checks and Balances

- Regulations require a supervisor to:
  - Know the standards
  - Work within the tribal health system
  - Be in contact/accessible
  - Regularly observe skills
- Each program develops a process by which supervision takes place and is recorded
- Best practices are shared

Dentist Supervisor Douglas White with DHAT Marian Petla, Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation
Myth:

Patients only want to see a dentist.
Improved Access, Improved Care

- 40,000 people in rural AK now have direct access to care
- Living and working in communities
- Continuity of care
  - Higher level of care

DHAT Aurora Johnson, NZ Educated
32 certified DHAT practicing in Alaska, some for more than 10 years.
Governor Murkowski

2nd class dental care for Alaska Natives deserves a ferocious reaction!

No Alaskan should face irreversible dental surgery by an unlicensed therapist with no dental degree. Alaska law is being broken unnecessarily.

Myth:

Dental Therapist provide substandard care
“A Review of the Global Literature on Dental Therapists”*

Dental Therapists:
• Decrease cost of care
• Improve access to care
• Provide care safely
• Public values the role of dental therapists
• Traditionally 2 years education


Supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Research Triangle Institute
Clinical Evaluation

- Summary of findings
  - Technically competent
  - Providing care safely and appropriately
  - Successfully treating cavities and helping relieve pain for patients without previous access to regular care
  - High patient satisfaction
  - Well accepted in AK tribal villages

*“Evaluation of the Dental Health Aide Therapist Workforce Model in Alaska Final Report” Prepared for: W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Rasmussen Foundation, Bethel Community Services Foundation. Prepared by: Scott Wetterhall, MD, MPH, James D. Bader, DDS, MPH, Barri B. Burrus, PhD, Jessica Y. Lee, DDS, PhD, Daniel A. Shugars, DDS, PhD, MPH. RTI International 3040 Cornwallis Road Research Triangle Park, NC 27709. RTI Project Number 0211727.000.001
We cannot drill our way to oral health

Myth:
Dental therapists do not provide prevention services
Encouraged to “put down the hand instruments” and provide community education on healthy behaviors and dental care.

55% spend 1-4 hours per month; 22% spend 5-10 hours; 22% spend 10-15 hours per month on education.
Each DHAT team on average, provides care to 830 patients during approximately 1200 patient encounters (or visits) each year.

From ANTHC Consultant Survey of AK Tribal Dental Directors
Scott and Co. Consulting
Head Start Oral Health Education
ECC Education for Medical Providers
Myth:

More education is needed to produce competent dental providers.
Different Providers

Different Education

DHAT

- NEED TO KNOW
- Limited scope, 46 procedures
- Supervised
- Prevention oriented team approach
- Accessible to students in target populations
- Culturally competent
- Patient centered

DENTIST

- NEED to know+ nice to know
- Large scope, 500+
- Team leader
- Surgically oriented
- Education is difficult to access, especially for minorities
- Struggling to address cultural competency
- Practice centered
Alaska DHAT Educational Program information:
First year: 40 weeks
Second year: 39 weeks
Total: 79 weeks (3160 hours)

Curriculum Break-down first year
Biological Science: 30%
Social Science: 10%
Pre-clinic: 40%
Clinic: 20%

Curriculum Break-down second year
Biological Science: 15%
Social Science: 7%
Pre-clinic: 0%
Clinic: 78% (1215 hours)

Curriculum Break-down two years combined:
Biological Science: 22.5%
Social Science: 8.5%
Pre-clinic: 20% (632 hours)
Clinic: 49% (1548 hours)
Dental Therapy Education: How much is enough?

• Historically- 2 years
• Trend- 3 years for dually qualified Hygiene/Therapist internationally
• My recommendation: one 2-year program with multiple entry points and prior learning credit.
2 year  BA/MA  RDH+MA

Driven to Discover

Scope

ALASKA NATIVE TRIBAL HEALTH CONSORTIUM
OUR VISION:
Alaska Native people are the healthiest people in the world.

Like us on Facebook: ANTHCsmile