



The National Coalition of

DENTISTS *for* HEALTH EQUITY

PURPOSE

To unite dentists who support evidence-based practices in the U.S. as a means to advance the goal of comprehensive health equity with a specific interest in oral health equity. One example of this is the utilization of dental therapists as a means of increasing access to dental care, expanding access to dental education opportunities and diversifying the profession of dentistry.

VISION

All persons in the U.S. regardless of age, race, income, gender, geographic isolation, and abilities shall have access to affordable, culturally appropriate, primary care including oral disease prevention and treatment services.

MISSION

To support and promote evidence-based, high quality, and cost-effective oral health services, including disease prevention, treatment and care delivery-models, specifically innovative workforce models demonstrated to address disparities of access.

BACKGROUND

Access to oral health services remains one of the greatest unmet health needs for children and low-income adults, causing millions of lost hours of school and work. Gaps in the dental workforce leave many rural, urban and tribal communities without adequate access to care. Geographic isolation, language barriers, and the lack of dentist, familiarity with the special needs of some members of the population, such as the lack of economic stability, adequate insurance, consistent and continuous dentist/patient relationships, health literacy, culturally appropriate care, and trust, can all lead to gross inequities in the oral health care delivery system. These inequities can result in poor school and work performance and impede employment. They also can diminish overall health contributing to adverse pregnancy outcomes, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and even death. Past attempts to address access have lacked an understanding of the above stated issues while others have made small inroads but have lacked resources.

OUR COMMITMENT

As dentists with extensive backgrounds in private practice, public health dental education, administration and research, we are committed to assuring access to affordable, high quality and culturally appropriate dental care for all. As health care professionals, we are committed to ensuring that all people have access to the essential oral health services they need to carry on a healthy and productive life. We believe we have a responsibility to supporting evidence-based responses, whether those are innovative methods of disease prevention, emerging providers, the use of telehealth or other developments that expands access of care for all.

RESPONSE - WE WILL:

- Provide and promote evidence-based prevention, treatment and delivery models,
- Act as a convener of dentists who support dental therapy practice, and
- Be champions of dental therapy and inform the public of the success of dental therapy by providing speakers at the local, state and national levels.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- As health care providers we have an obligation to advocate for change that will bring about equitable healthcare for all, including oral healthcare;
- Every community should have access to quality, affordable, essential dental care;
- The evidence demonstrates that dental therapists provide increased access to dental care with high quality and cost-effective services; and
- Consistency is needed in dental therapy licensure, and dental therapy education based on standards created by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA).

OUR APPROACHES WILL INCLUDE:

- Facilitate the integration of dental therapists as an integral member of the oral health care team;
- Strongly encourage robust dental therapy programs based on the CODA standards;
- Change the narrative from misinformation and opinion to data and reported program outcomes;
- Disseminate positive messages regarding the demonstrated effectiveness of dental therapists, based on the evidence; and
- Build a united dentist voice in support of the practice of dental therapy.