Meeting the Demand: Strategies to Improve Access to Oral Health Services

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45,115,590

Number of Americans living in areas with a dentist shortage.³

A Dental Workforce Shortage

% of State Population living in Dental Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA)

- 45 Million people living in Dental HPSAs nationwide
- 6,000 additional dentists needed to eliminate shortage areas

[Map of the United States with states color-coded by percentage of population living in HPSAs.]

- Less than 10%
- 10-14.9%
- 15-19.9%
- 20% or more
52%

Percentage of U.S. children enrolled in Medicaid who did not receive dental care in 2011.¹

22

Number of states in which most Medicaid-enrolled children did not receive dental care in 2011.²

Number of Americans treated in ERs for preventable dental problems in 2009.\textsuperscript{5}

37%

Percentage of dentists over the age of 55 and nearing retirement.⁴

An Aging Dental Workforce

Percentage of Dentists over age 55 (2009)

The Affordable Care Act

- Requirement (unless stand alone dental plan exists) that a pediatric dental benefit be included in the essential health benefits package in the new state exchanges (Title I, Secs. 1302, 1311)

- Option that states set Medicaid eligibility cap no lower than 138 percent of Federal Poverty Level and cover all individuals meeting the eligibility standard (Title II, Section 2001)

- Extension of funding for the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) through FY 2015 and authorization of program through 2019 (Titles II, X)
The Affordable Care Act

Provisions authorized but not appropriated:

- Demonstrations and evaluation of alternative dental care providers (Title V, Section 5304) (current block on funding)

- Expanded dental training programs (Title V, Section 5303)

- New or expanded primary care residency programs, including dental programs (Title V, Section 5508)
Challenges

- Shortage/Maldistribution of dentists
- Emergency room utilization costs
- Too few providers accepting Medicaid patients
- Fiscal reality of states
- Lack of adult dental coverage
Raising Medicaid Reimbursement Rates

Increases in reimbursement rates have been shown to increase dentist participation in Medicaid and the number of patients treated,\(^1\) but studies have also shown that *rate increases on their own are not sufficient* to improve access to dental care.\(^2\)

More Steps Needed to Increase Dentist Participation in Medicaid:

- Easing administrative processes
- Involving state dental societies and individual dentists as active partners in program improvement
- Working with patients and their families about how to use dental services
Desperate for Care

Free clinic in Cape Girardeau, Missouri on May 3, 2013. People camped out in line for two days to receive free dental care.

Expanding the reach of the dental team with additional providers

- Dental Health Aide Therapists (AK)
- Dental Therapists (MN)
- Advanced Dental Therapists (MN)
- Community Dental Health Coordinators (new model piloted by the ADA)
- Other state solutions similar to a physician’s assistant on a medical team
2003 Dental Workforce Map

Dental Health Aide Therapists

AK
Expanding the reach of the dental team
Alaska

Dental Health Aide Therapists (DHAT)

✓ 40,000 people in rural AK now have direct access to care.

✓ DHATs see an average of 830 individual patients per year.
✓ 700 of those visits are for prevention.
### Expanding the reach of the dental team

**Minnesota: Children’s Dental Services**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dental Therapists (2)</th>
<th>Advanced Dental Therapist (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ 367 patients seen in 2013</td>
<td>✓ 922 patients seen in 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ 334 on state insurance</td>
<td>✓ 826 on state insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ 20 private insurance</td>
<td>✓ 41 private insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ 11 full pay</td>
<td>✓ 32 full pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ 2 sliding scale</td>
<td>✓ 18 free care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ 5 sliding scale</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: email from Sarah Wovcha, executive director of Children’s Dental Services, August 5, 2013
Financial Impact of Expanding the Dental Team

According to a May, 2013 study on the economic viability of dental therapists in Alaska and Minnesota, dental therapists cost their employers less than 30 cents for every dollar of revenue they generate.

Total Revenue Generated by Advanced Dental Therapists and Dental Therapists in Minnesota (in blue) and Dental Health Aide Therapists in Alaska (in green)

Report conducted by Dr. Frances M. Kim, May 2013
Number of countries outside the United States that use dental therapists and other midlevel professionals to expand care to more people.\(^6\)

2013 Dental Workforce Map

States considering additional dental providers

States with additional dental providers
Conclusions

• We are experiencing a dental crisis in the United States

• State budgets are being punished as a result of lack of access to dental care

• It is a complex problem that requires multiple solutions

• The data show that expanding the reach of the dental team with additional providers, similar to physician’s assistant on a medical team, improves access to care for vulnerable populations in a financially sustainable way
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