Innovative Training Program for Dental Health Aide Therapists to Provide Midlevel Dental Care in the Alaska Bush

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Learning Objectives

- Introduce one model for training mid-level dental professionals to address dental needs in Alaska Native communities
- Give an overview of the competency based curriculum in the DENTEX program for Dental Health Aide Therapists - DHAT

Learning Objectives

- Understand the role of the DHAT to provide culturally sensitive community based dental services and primary care treatment to manage caries and other oral diseases

Learning Objectives

- Understand the role of the DHAT as a midlevel dental professional with a specific scope of practice operating remotely under general supervision

Dental Therapist History

- W.H.O. cites 42 countries that utilize Dental Therapists
- New Zealand has 88 yrs experience and Canada has over 38 yrs

Dental Therapists

- Function as part of the dental team under the supervision of a dentist
- Equipped to help provide the educational, preventive and safety net services that are most needed
- Exceptional safety record under general supervision for children and adults
DENTEX Training Program

- Collaboration
  - University of Washington MEDEX Northwest Physician Assistant Training Program, Seattle WA
  - Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC), Anchorage, AK
- Two year program based on models from
  - New Zealand
  - UK
  - Canada
  - Singapore
  - Others

Distinctly designed to address the Alaska Native Tribal health care needs
Integration into community-based medical prevention programs
New mix of skills that include behavioral and public health skills needed to affect change

Mission Statement

DENTEX, the University of Washington School of Medicine’s Dental Health Aide Therapist Program, is committed to training Alaska Native dental health professionals to practice dental therapy with dentist supervision

The program provides a narrowly focused, competency-based, primary care curriculum that emphasizes community level dental disease prevention for the underserved Alaska Native populations
The Alaska DHAT Model

**Traditional Dental Education**
- University Based
- High cost investment
  - 4 + 4 Years DDS/DMD
  - General Practice
    - Specialty: +2 years
- Practice location
  - Mostly urban

**Midlevel Education**
- Community Based
  - Rural community recruited
- Low cost investment
  - 2 years Certificate
- Independent practice
  - with Dentist supervision
- Practice location
  - Rural community based practice

**Requirements-Application**
- HS diploma or GED
- Preference given to applicants with some college level academics
- Tribal Association sponsorship
- Prior experience in dental or medical setting preferred

**Selection**
- References
  - Tribal Association
  - Employer or community leader
- Personal statement
  - “Why I want to be a DHAT”
- Admission interview

**Curriculum Features**
- Competency based training with frequent exams and feedback
- Led by full-time onsite dentists
- Modular lectures by dental school faculty
  - University of Washington
  - University of Minnesota
  - Baylor
  - University of Florida
  - University of Alaska
  - Dental hygiene faculty
- Culturally respectful and sensitive

**Class 2, Year 1**
with US Senator Murkowski and faculty

**DENTEX Curriculum Year 1: Anchorage**
- Anatomy & Physiology
  - Online course
- Basic dental clinical environment skills
- General health sciences
- Oral health sciences
DENTEX Curriculum
Year 1: Anchorage
- Community dentistry and behavioral management techniques
- Development of a high level of practical clinical skills
  - Simulation
  - Direct patient contact

DENTEX Curriculum
Year 2: Bethel, Alaska
- 39 weeks of clinical instruction (1600 hrs) with direct supervision
- Community dentistry and prevention
- Village practice rotations
  - Fly into rural Bush location with avg. 200-400 people

DENTEX Curriculum
Year 2: Bethel, Alaska
- Telemedicine communication training
- Special topics:
  - Maternal oral health
  - Diabetes
  - Geriatrics
  - Equipment repair
  - Research - data collection

Class I, Year 2

DHAT Practice Continuum
- Independent practice with remote dentist supervision
- Primary care team approach
  - Integrated part of the delivery system
  - Work with dentists, physicians, PAs, NPs, and nurses
- Not a second level of care
DHAT Practice Continuum

- Biological approach to oral disease
  - Reduce infectious caries and periodontal bacteria in the oral cavity
- Clinical practice focus
  - Basic pediatric dentistry
  - Adult palliative care
- Limited specific scope of practice

Practice Continuum Complexity

- Quality equivalence
- General supervision
- Reduced cost

DHAT

Dentist

Extraction

Implant

Prevention Based Curriculum

- Focus on behavior change
  - Motivational interviewing
  - Risk assessment for dental disease
  - Triage

Nontraditional Worksite

Certification after Graduation

- Additional 400+ hours of preceptorship
  - Direct supervision at tribal base location
- Scope of practice
  - Based on demonstrated clinical skills
  - Guided by tribal base location needs

Recertification Requirements

- Logging of twenty-four hours continuing education annually
- Recertification every 2 years
Quality Control and Safety

- Quality Control performed by dentists
  - Case discussion: pre/post
  - Direct observation
  - Chart review

- Oversight and authorizing entity
  - Community Health Aide Program Certification Board (CHAP-CB)

Practice Model
Dental Therapist

- Living and practicing in a village
- Itinerant regional practice
- Emphasis on prevention
- Strong links to schools and community
- Opportunity for continuity of care

www.dentexak.washington.edu