

NewsBytes

The Ohio Dental Association's e-newsletter providing the latest updates on dentistry in Ohio

ODA opposes newly-introduced legislation to create dental therapists

Legislation to create a dental therapist in Ohio has been introduced in the Ohio Senate. The Ohio Dental Association strongly opposes Senate Bill 98, which is sponsored by Sen. Peggy Lehner (R-Kettering) and Sen. Cecil Thomas (D-Cincinnati).

This radical proposal would allow a person with only three years of post-high school training to perform irreversible surgical dental procedures including the extraction of teeth, cutting tooth structure and gums, and the administration of local anesthetic injections.

The Ohio Dental Association opposes this proposal because it presents an unnecessary risk to the health of our most vulnerable dental patients and is a diversion of scarce resources that are better utilized supporting programs proven to improve access to quality dental care.

Dentists who are interested in educating lawmakers on this issue should plan to attend the ODA Day at the Statehouse on April 26 in Columbus. Register online at oda.org/events.

Register for ODA Day at the Statehouse

Day at the Statehouse, the Ohio Dental Association's most important grassroots advocacy event, will be April 26 at the Renaissance Columbus Downtown Hotel.

Day at the Statehouse gives dentists, dental residents and dental students an opportunity to speak with their legislators about issues important to dentistry and advocate for issues that impact their patients, their dental practices and oral health in Ohio.

Visit www.oda.org/events to register and for more information.



President's Message

MANISH "MANNY" CHOPRA, D.M.D.
President



As many of you may already know, I am the current Chairman of the Council on Dental Care Programs and Dental Practice at the Ohio Dental Association. Our Council has the responsibilities for addressing the regulatory and advocacy concerns of our members. In relation to our advocacy efforts, once a year, we get the opportunity to participate in a grassroots meeting in Columbus, the Day at the Statehouse. This year, on Wednesday, April 26th, we have the occasion to speak, one on one, with our local legislators about the dental issues that affect oral health in Ohio.

The first topic that we will be discussing is **Dental Therapists**. The Kellogg Foundation has funded an effort in Ohio through the Universal Health Care Action Network of Ohio to promote and create a new dental provider called a dental therapist. This individual would be, with just 3 years of training, allowed to provide a diagnosis, treatment plan, fillings, extractions, administer local anesthetic, and supervise dental hygienists and dental assistant. The ODA lobbying team is constantly working to educate our policymakers on the dangers of this proposal. We believe that the scope of practice for these dental therapists is much too extensive for the minimal training proposed. We further believe that only a licensed dentist should perform irreversible surgical procedures.

The next item for discussion is the **Non-covered services bill**. For many years, dental insurance companies have been telling dentists what they can charge for procedures that they do not cover. This creates hardships for dental offices and interferes with the dentist patient relationship, and can limit patient choices. This can possibly force some patients to forgo preferred treatment options or disrupt continuity of dental care by forcing patients to go to another dentist for certain procedures. The ODA supports legislation that would prohibit dental insurance companies from being able to dictate fees dentists charge for services not covered by the insurer.

Cosmetic Medical Procedure Tax- currently the states sales tax does not apply to health care services. The proposed 2018-2019 state budget bill would extend the states sales tax to "cosmetic" medical and dental services. This would be a dramatic change in Ohio policy which has consistently exempted most professional services from this sales tax. This not only drives up the cost of care for Ohio's dental patients, it further leaves it to the Department of Taxation to determine whether a certain procedure is cosmetic or functional. The ODA opposes applying the states sales tax to any dental service.

The ODA Day at the Statehouse provides the opportunity for our legislators to hear directly from dentists who live and practice in their districts on these issues.

Tele-dentistry- The ODA is pursuing legislation to update the Ohio Dental Practice Act to permit dentists to utilize tele-dentistry to extend the reach of the dental team into underserved communities. This ODA backed bill will also expand the capacity of the Ohio Dentist Repayment Program, which created incentives for dentists to provide dental care

to underserved communities in designated dental professional shortage areas. This further targets specific scholarships in the Choose Ohio First Program for dental students who agree to practice in designated underserved areas upon graduation.

The ODA Day at the Statehouse provides the opportunity for our legislators to hear directly from dentists who live and practice in their districts on these issues. Please contact us if you would like to join in this year's event. You will be briefed by the ODA lobbying team, via conference call, and with written material on the pertinent issues. This is a free event and we look forward to hearing from you, regarding how you can participate.