



Word of Mouth

enews from the

South Florida Dental Hygiene Association

October, 2007

Special Edition on Preceptorship!!!!

Florida Board of Dentistry Sets Date for Rules Change

At the Board of Dentistry (BOD) meeting on 9/14/2007, the Florida Dental Association submitted a letter proposing rules changes to allow dental assistants to scale supragingival calculus and to probe the gingival sulcus, using instruments that include, ***but are not limited to***, scalers and periodontal probes. It should be noted that the original policy statement proposing these changes was written by a dentist who was subsequently appointed to the Board of Dentistry by Governor Christ.

Janice Elkins, President of FADE (Florida Allied Dental Educators) spoke to the Board explaining that the educators do not want these changes, are not prepared to teach these procedures and that neither procedure is even included in dental assisting textbooks.

Cookie Martin, RDH, FDHA's Immediate Past President, stated FDHA's opposition and our contention that statutes do not allow scaling to be done by anyone other than an RDH. It is FDHA's position that neither scaling nor probing meets the statutory definition of a remediable task, and, therefore, neither is delegable. In closing, Ms. Martin asked the Board to remember its primary role as protectors of the health and safety of the citizens of Florida.

In spite of the above testimony, the Board scheduled a RULES WORKSHOP with the entire board to work on the proposed rule changes. This workshop will be held on Thursday afternoon (time about 3 PM) December 6th prior to the December 7, 2007 BOD meeting in Ft. Lauderdale. ***Put these dates on your calendar.***

Still think you don't need to pitch in and help? We have a great deal of work before us. We have strong indications that if FDA is not successful at the Board level, a legislative effort will follow (or, more likely, coincide.) In other words, if the Board does not change current rules, FDA intends to change the law to allow dental assistants to perform the functions currently assigned to dental hygienists. Whether this assault on our profession is followed through the administrative process, the legislature, or both, preceptorship practice in Florida is a real threat.

What can you do? We have already told you that it takes money to defend our profession against hostile legal actions. Please send a \$35 check (or larger) made out to to FL HyPac, c/o Donna Wofford, RDH, FL HyPAC Treasurer, 2706 Clubhouse Drive, Plant City, FL 33566. Alternatively, send a check made out to FDHA, with *Legal/Legislative Fund* on the memo line and send it to Linda Lambert, RDH, FDHA Treasurer, 10112 Huntsman Path, Pensacola, FL 32514

If you are able to send more, **please do!!!** Donations of \$100 or more (max \$500) require a notation of your occupation [ie. dental hygienist]. We will need support to launch our own legislative response on this latest attempt to make your license worthless.

You can also help in other ways. To begin, forward this newsletter to every hygienist you know. Send it to other supporters and let them know why this proposed rule change threatens them.

Next, go to www.fdha.org and download letters of support. Copy as many as you can, get them filled out, and return them to us. The instructions are on the form.

If you do not belong to ADHA/FDHA, now is the time for you to come to the aid of your professional association. While you are downloading letters of support, click on the membership link and join online. Let us know we can count on you from now on. The more hygienists in the Association, the stronger our voice is.

We want and need support letters from dental hygienists and general citizens. Most especially, we need letters from dentists who feel that these rule changes would not benefit their patients, the public or the practice of dentistry in Florida. Please ask your employer to sign a letter supporting our position defending quality patient care. Ask them to signify their status as dentists.

Next, talk about this proposal with your peers, your friends and neighbors, clients and co-workers. These changes affect us all. Encourage every dental hygienist you know to help us. Ask them to write a check to FDHA or to HyPac and direct them to www.fdha.org so they can participate in the petition drive. Better yet, hand them a petition and a membership application. Collect the petition, and send it back yourself.

Finally, try to attend the Rules Workshop and Board Meeting on December 6th and 7th. A strong showing from concerned dental hygienists is necessary to let the Board know we are determined to protect Florida's dental clients from this assault on their periodontal health. We cannot let the Board of Dentistry pass a self-serving, calloused act that disregards the health and safety of the people of Florida.

This month, the success of this newsletter, the survival of our profession, and the oral health of Florida's consumers truly depends on you. Let's get the *Word of Mouth* out.

Carroll Cameron, RDH, EdD, Editor,
South Florida Dental Hygiene Society