

Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 17, 2024
5:00 pm
335 Randolph Avenue Room 104
St. Paul, MN 55102
and
Open WebEx/Teleconference

Call to Order

Hassan Ismail, DDS, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

Committee Members

Hassan Ismail, DDS, Chair
Trina Courtright, DH, ADT
Heidi Donnelly, LDA
P. Angela Rake, DDS

Board Staff

Bridgett Anderson, Executive Director
Brian Cochran, Assistant Director Licensing and
Credentialing
Kathy Johnson, Legal Analyst

Board Member

Peter Cannon, DDS (Attending to observe)
Rick Nolting, DDS, MS (Attending to observe)

Approval of Draft Agenda

The January 17, 2024 agenda was reviewed and approved.

Approval of Past Meeting Minutes

The November 3, 2023 meeting minutes were reviewed and approved as submitted.

Reports

None

Unfinished Business

None

New Business

Unlicensed Dental Assisting Discussion

The Committee discussed the dental assistant shortage along with access and delivery of care issues while focusing on the Board's mission of protecting the public. They reviewed a report entitled *Dental Workforce Shortages: Data to Navigate Today's Labor Market*, and studied results from a past Minnesota Dental Association survey that was sent to dentists regarding unlicensed dental assistant

duties. Committee members opined that reversible, non-invasive procedures delegated to unlicensed dental professionals are an important topic for consideration.

Proposals from Associations

The Committee reviewed proposals submitted from the Minnesota Dental Association (MDA) and the Minnesota Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. The Committee discussed five of the MDA proposals for unlicensed dental assistants:

- Taking extraoral and intraoral photographs (along with digital scanning) is already incorporated in new rules project and will be in effect once the rules are published.
- Taking and recording vital signs.
- Application of topical fluoride
- Charting existing restorations or conditions.
- Topical anesthetic application to injection sites.

Equipment for measuring vitals is far more automated than in the past. The public already has access to technology which allows individuals to take many in-home vital signs including blood pressure.

Unlicensed staff trained to perform some duties to gather vitals in a dental setting is reasonable and could provide an extra measure of safety should an emergency arise. Delegation to an unlicensed dental assistant for taking vital signs could already be interpreted as part of current license rule as assisting with delegated procedures.

The Committee discussed the topical anesthetic application and agreed an unlicensed dental assistant could safely apply this under supervision, as most topical anesthetics used have similar levels of benzocaine as over the counter products.

Preliminary charting of the oral cavity was deliberated. Licensed dental assistants are trained to view a patient's mouth and chart existing dental restorations. Education of licensed dental assistants is extensive and unlicensed dental assistants may not have formal training. Licensed dental assistants are educated to identify many aspects of charting including, but not limited to, tooth numbers and restorations present. Committee members discussed unlicensed dental assistants holding a limited radiology registration with the Board have been trained in anatomy and could be trained to identify where restorations are present from viewing X-rays. Holding limited radiology registration with the Board could be a requirement before allowing an unlicensed dental assistant to perform preliminary charting. The dentist is ultimately responsible for the final charting information when completing a full exam. Preliminary charting saves the dentist time and has low risk of patient harm. Delegation to an unlicensed dental assistant for preliminary charting could already be interpreted as part of current license rule as assisting with delegated procedures.

MDA proposed creating a certification allowing unlicensed dental assistants to perform preventative functions including coronal polishing and sealant applications after training. Specific tooth preparation is required before applying sealants. The MN Dental Therapy Association submitted information clarifying sealants improperly placed may lead to higher rates of tooth and surrounding tissue damage. The Committee decided it is not in the interest of public safety for unlicensed individuals to apply sealants.

Committee members do not want to create different certification pathways for various functions as it would be logistically difficult for the Board to maintain. Bridgett Anderson reported the Board would require more staffing to provide certification pathways for various individual dental assistant skills, which would have a fiscal impact. Delegation would be complicated as dentists would need to understand which tasks each of their staff is licensed or certified to perform. The Board has already received many complaints regarding unlicensed dental assistants performing duties for which they are not authorized to perform.

Unlicensed dental assistants administering nitrous oxide and oxygen was discussed. The Committee noted there is a fine line between knowing if a patient is being managed well with the nitrous oxide levels administered. Licensed dental assistants who have nitrous certification are trained to watch for patient reactions. There is concern an unlicensed dental assistant may not detect a concern to know when to stop nitrous and begin oxygen. The Committee decided it is necessary to have a licensed dental assistant with expanded functions certification for administering nitrous oxide.

Committee members emphasized licensed dental assistants perform an important role supported by their educational background and their position should not be devalued. Greater access to becoming educated as a licensed dental assistant is a factor in solving the dental assistant shortage and supporting quality dental care. Interest in the profession is also a factor. Public comment was heard from attendees.

Announcements

Executive Director Bridgett Anderson reminded public attendees the Minnesota Open Meeting Law does not require meetings to have public testimony/participation in board member discussion. The Board may invite public comment during a meeting at its discretion, but it is not a requirement.

The next Policy Committee meeting is scheduled March 5, 2024, 4:00 pm.

Adjourn

Hassan Ismail adjourned at 6:30 pm.

Reviewed by:

Hassan Ismail DDS
Hassan Ismail, DDS, Chair

May 16, 2024
Date