DENTAL HEALTH AIDE THERAPIST (DHAT)

American Academy of Dental Therapy, 2011
History of Dental Caries in Alaska Native People

Archeological records show caries rate of ~1%

1925

Studies show lowest caries rate in the world

1928 – 1930’s

Improved air transportation and dietary changes

1984

Prevalence of dental caries in children 2x same aged U.S. children

1999

Vast majority of children have dental caries

Alaska and the “Lower 48”
Our Needs = Your Needs

- Increased access and prevention
- Basic restorative services
- Locally provided, culturally competent
DHAT 2-year Education
No Prerequisites

“A local solution to a local problem”

Conan Murat, DHAT, standing his ground
Community-based DHAT as part of a dentist led team
Dental Therapists:
• Decrease cost of care
• Improve access to care
• Provide care safely
• Public values the role of dental therapists
• Traditionally 2 years education


Supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Research Triangle Institute
Clinical Evaluation*

- **Summary of findings**
  - Technically competent
  - Providing care safely and appropriately
  - Successfully treating cavities and helping relieve pain for patients without previous access to regular care
  - High patient satisfaction

*“Evaluation of the Dental Health Aide Therapist Workforce Model in Alaska Final Report” Prepared for: W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Rasmuson Foundation, Bethel Community Services Foundation. Prepared by: Scott Wetterhall, MD, MPH, James D. Bader, DDS, MPH, Barri B. Burrus, PhD, Jessica Y. Lee, DDS, PhD, Daniel A. Shugars, DDS, PhD, MPH. RTI International 3040 Cornwallis Road Research Triangle Park, NC 27709. RTI Project Number 0211727.000.001
American Association of Public Health Dentistry
- 11-person academic panel
- Model curriculum
- two-year, post-secondary
- Open access online:
From ANTHC Consultant Survey of AK Tribal Dental Directors

Each DHAT team on average, provides care to 830 patients during approximately 1200 patient encounters (or visits) each year.

Scott and Co. Consulting
Tribal revenue as reported by dental directors with DHAT

*The net annual revenue* stream generated by the employer is $125,000-$245,000 after costs (DHAT and dental assistant salary, benefits, travel, supplies, and other costs) with savings of ~$40,000 in avoided travel costs to receive dental care.

19 DHATs generate 76 jobs (dental assistants, training program faculty, management, staff) with half of these jobs and the related $9m economic activity in rural Alaska.

Scott and Co. Consulting, 2011
Improved Access and Quality

• 27 certified DHAT
• 81 communities in rural AK
  • Over 40,000 people have access
• Continuity of care
  • Higher level of care possible
  • Dentist working up to their licensure

DHAT Aurora Johnson, NZ Educated
Demographics of the existing US dental workforce

Dentists:  
- 86% White
- 6.9% Asian/Pacific Islander
- 3.4% African American
- 3.4% Hispanic
- 0.2% American Indian

Dental hygienists:  
- >90% non-Hispanic white

DHAT:  
- 88% American Indian/Alaska Native


*2. Dental Hygiene at the Crossroads of Change, Environmental Scan 2011-2021, Marsha Rhea and Craig Bettles.
Barbara Jones, president of South Arkansas Community College (SouthArk)

“Jones cited additional problems with degree creep in nursing: a lack of qualified faculty to teach baccalaureate programs, a decline in workforce diversity, deceased access to health care in rural areas, and a decline in job satisfaction and morale if health care workers feel their skills and knowledge are not fully used.”

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Div. of Community Health Services- DHAT education