

ABSTRACT: 2018 ELAM Institutional Action Project

Project Title: The Other Doctors: Creating Primary Care Dentists

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Topic Category: Education

Background, Significance of project: Many Americans experience poor health, related to disparities in access to and quality of health care. The AAMC forecasts shortages of MDs. Dentists are trained to provide research, diagnosis, prevention, screening, referral, medical and surgical treatment. They could also provide primary care within dental licensure. This concurs with recommendations of the U.S. Surgeon General's National Prevention Council and others.

Purpose/Objectives: The overall objective is to enhance the predoctoral dental curriculum to train graduates as primary care providers. Objective #1 (ELAM fellowship): Determine enhanced competencies to train primary care dentists. Objective #2 (2018-2020): Determine resources needed for this extra curriculum. Perform cost/benefit analysis of providing extra curriculum: school, student, profession perspectives. Gauge acceptability of model with key stakeholders. Objective #3 (2020-2027): Compare effectiveness vs. traditional dental model for students, clinics, patients via pilot projects.

Methods/Approach/Evaluation Strategy: Objective #1: CODA Accreditation Standards, ADEA Competencies for the New General Dentist, and IPEC Competencies for Interprofessional Collaborative Practice 2016 were referenced. Initial competencies were drafted, considering what additional skills a primary care dentist needs compared to current dentists. Using a modified Delphi process, initial competencies were refined with a convenience sample of experts in predoctoral dental education, including academic deans of key dental schools, oral medicine educators, MDs, and others.

Outcomes/Results: The greatest additional need was to ensure primary care dentists could successfully integrate into interprofessional practice (IPP). Many schools do not assess competency in biomedical knowledge at the level required for primary care, although they do deliver adequate biomedical training. For medical management, graduates require additional training in expanded interview and examination, more clinical testing, and more pharmacotherapy. With more demand for referral, consultation, counseling, and interventions, graduates require more training in health promotion, disease prevention, and communication. They need more training in care of diverse populations; critical thinking for IPP; practice management related to medical records and billing; jurisprudence to identifying permitted scope of practice; and ethics to apply dental ethical principles to IPP.

Discussion/Conclusion with Statement of Impact/Potential Impact: The initial draft of competencies and related subcompetencies resulted in little disagreement among stakeholders, except regarding scope of the expanded patient examination. Most additional training pertains to working in IPP teams. Dentists are already extensively trained in critical thinking, patient assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning, pharmacotherapy, prevention, health promotion, medical and surgical management, care of diverse populations, ethics, jurisprudence, and practice management. Funding and scope of practice/licensure issues may be barriers. It is deemed feasible to proceed with Objective #2, pending funding. Faced with a shortage of MDs as primary health care providers, the health care system could gain capacity by using dentists, "the other doctors", as primary health care providers within the scope of dental licensure.