The International Experience with Dental Therapists: Lessons to be Learned for the United States in Expanding the Oral Health Workforce

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Introduction
The Global Experience with Dental Therapists

WK Kellogg Report
Report Findings

1. Dental therapists scope of practice is in caring for children.
2. Dental therapists practice in the public sector, typically in schools.
3. Dental therapists improve access to care specifically for children.
4. Dental therapists provide technically competent and safe care for children.
5. Dental therapists are generally not licensed professionals, rather registered auxiliaries.
6. Two years (post-secondary) is the characteristic training period for therapists.
7. Dental therapists practice with general supervision of dentists.
8. The dental profession values the role of dental therapists in countries in which they practice; though there is resistance to therapists treating adults.
9. The public values the role of dental therapists.
10. Dental therapists have the potential to decrease the cost of oral heath care for children.

Dental Therapists are being Introduced into the U.S. Oral Health Workforce
Lessons Learned from the Global Experience with Dental Therapists

Globally, Therapists Focus on Children...Why?

- Adult Care is Complex
- Therapists Treating Adults is Inefficient
- Safety Issues Emerge with Adults
- Ethical Issues
Globally, Therapists Practice in the Public Sector, not in Private Practice

New Zealand
Hong Kong

Canada
Globally, Therapists are Trained in Two Year Programs, Not Linked to Dental Hygienist Training
Recommendations

1. Add dental therapists to the oral health workforce.
2. Train dental therapists in a three academic year program to meet accreditation standards, but programs structured over two calendar years to promote cost effectiveness.
3. Focus therapists' care on children, not adults.
4. Deploy therapists in school-based programs or in public and not-for-profit clinics, not in private dental offices.
5. Do not link dental therapists training to that of dental hygienists.
6. Enable therapists to practice with the general supervision of a dentist, that is, with a dentist not present on site.
Publications and References

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