



Supervision of dentistry students

Issue

Oregon's statutes relating to the supervision of dentistry students does not reflect the best practices applied in schools of dentistry across the nation. The implied 1:1 faculty to student supervision requirement in ORS 679.025 and 680.020 is not aligned with the American Dental Association's Commission on Dental Accreditation, which does not specify a specific ratio, but supports a range of ratios appropriate for patient safety and student education. In general, in dental schools across the US, the ratio of students to faculty varies from 3:1 to 10:1. At OHSU's School of Dentistry, that range is 3:1 to 7:1, depending upon context. The Oregon Board of Dentistry is well aware of this disconnect between statute and practice that creates barriers to OHSU's ability to educate the number of dentistry students Oregon needs. The Board has supported this change

Background

An essential component of providing high quality dental education is ensuring students have opportunities to perform clinical care supervised in a manner appropriate to their level of experience, knowledge, complexity of the procedure and patient. The American Dental Association's Commission on Dental Accreditation, through its accreditation process, ensures that OHSU maintains a level of supervision that is appropriate for patient safety and student education.

In the OHSU pre-doctoral program, students begin to provide patient care in their first year of dental school and through graduation. OHSU's postgraduate programs train students who are already dentists in specialty areas of dentistry and they provide care for patients in expanded levels of complexity. To ensure patient safety at OHSU, the ratio of learning students to supervising faculty depends on the specific treatment circumstances and the faculty's judgment regarding the complexity of the procedure, the experience and skill level of the student, and the specific condition of the patient.

OHSU's faculty make these determinations on a day-to-day, student-to-student and procedure-to-procedure basis. Therefore, supervision in some circumstances is direct faculty to student supervision. At other times, several students may be working with patients and supervised by one faculty member. This practice is the standard practice at schools of dentistry across the United States.

Proposed solution

At the recommendation of the Oregon Board of Dentistry staff, Senate Bill 561 would amend ORS 679.025 (b and c) and ORS 680.020 (b and c) to align the language in the state's Dental Practice Act with respect to supervision of students by faculty members with the American Dental Association's Commission on Dental Accreditation guidelines and dental schools across the country. Specifically, change the language in the Dental Practice Act from "Direct" to "Indirect" supervision in the sections that permit students to practice as long as they are supervised. This change will ensure patient safety while allowing OHSU to maximize training opportunities for more students.

Cost

There is no cost associated with this change.

Questions?

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