

SB: 824: Dental Licensure Testing

SB 824 would clarify that the Oregon Board of Dentistry may accept alternative examinations (such as the OSCE: Objective structured clinical examination) as another form of minimum requirement for dental licensure rather than current live patient testing requirements. SB 824 maintains the Board's authority over which specific tests are accepted for licensure.

When a dental student is ready to be tested for licensure, they don't just schedule a test date. They also have to find and secure a patient presenting with a particular set of clinical parameters, delay treatment of that individual until exam date, and ensure that the patient shows up-- often with financial incentives and arranging transportation from great distances. The student makes all of these, often costly preparations, while hoping that no other external factors, like a 2015 example of Ecoli in the community water, suddenly prevent the test from occurring.

Further, the current live patient test presents ethical issues and are not the best form of testing for competency. Dentistry is the only health profession that still tests on live human subjects. While this test has been in place for decades, the American Dental Association, American Student Dental Association, American Dental Educators' Association, and dental school deans across the country agree that there is a better way to test our dental students for competency.

The Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) holds all dental schools to a strict standard of competency that involves much more than the ability to perform a technical skill. Luckily, there are better ways to measure and test clinical competency. There is movement across the country away from the usage of live patient exams and instead relying on a student's performance during their dental school time, testing judgment rather than hand skills, and ensuring that every dental student is tested in a similar, structured way to assess their overall competency to practice.

One such test is the OSCE, a form of multi-station examination for clinical competency. Evidence from Canadian dental licensure OSCE indicates that there is more reliability and validity in OSCE scores as compared with patient-based tests.

Oregon dentists urge your support of SB 824.

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