

Vermont State

100 Dorset Street, Ste. 18
So. Burlington, VT 05403



Dental Society

802-864-0115 802-864-0116 fax
www.vsds.org

VSDS Forum on Access to Dental Care and the Dental Workforce.

On May 14, 2010, over 60 Vermont dentists met to consider issues surrounding access to dental care and dental workforce, including existing and proposed dental auxiliaries; including dental therapists.

It was a full day of presentations and dialogue. Participants stayed to the conclusion and left with a clearer understanding of both the challenges for improving the oral health of Vermonters and of the options and opportunities available to meet these challenges.

The morning consisted of a review of developments in both New England and other states and countries. **Jack Mooney DMD**, Past President, Connecticut State Dental Association reviewed CSDA's decision process to recommend a pilot study of the dental therapist position in school settings. **David A. Nash DMD**, William R. Willard Professor of Dental Education, University of Kentucky presented his support of a pediatric dental therapist to improve the profession's ability to care for children and **Paul S. Casamassimo, DDS, MS**, Chief of Dentistry at Nationwide Children's Hospital and Professor of Pediatric Dentistry at the Ohio State University College of Dentistry questioned the appropriateness of a dental therapist when other options are available.

Brian Scott DDS recent Past President of the California Dental Association, and current chair of the CDA Access to Care Workgroup reviewed several projects being conducted to evaluate the economics, safety and practice settings for various workforce models including the dental therapist. It is expected that the findings from these projects will be released later this year.

Following lunch, **Vermont State Senator Jane Kitchell**, Caledonia County reported on the difficulties of the last legislative session. She spoke about the hope for Vermont's new Challenges for Change legislation, a design to enable Vermont government to do more for less. She expressed her hope that meetings such as this would lead to improved access to care for Vermonters.

David McLean DDS, VSDS Executive Board 2nd Director provided an update on the University of New England's efforts to open a dental school in 2012. He discussed the school's proposed focus on recruiting and training dental students with a focus on rural practice particularly northern New England.

Patrick Rowe, DDS, Director, Oral Health Program VT Department of Health presented the department's commitment to identify the specifics of Vermont dental access problems including populations in need, geographic differences and reasons access is unavailable. He foresees a diverse group of Vermonters, including dentistry, participating in this evaluation.

Scott DeBruin, DDS VSDS Pres Elect reviewed the status of Vermont's dental safety net providers, not for profit and FQHC dental clinics and noted that private dental practices provide 80% of the care received by Vermonters on state dental assistance programs. He also commented on a recent meeting the VSDS Executive Board had with two Vermont organizations that are recipients of a WK Kellogg Foundation grant to advance the concept of a dental therapist in the state. The VSDS Executive Board met in May with Carlen Finn, Executive Director, Voices for Vermont Children (formerly the Vermont Children's Forum) and Peter Sterling, Executive Director, Vermont Campaign for Health Care Security Education Fund. The grant will focus on highlighting dental access to care problems for adults and children and appears to be advocating for the Alaska/New Zealand dental therapist model that they hope will enhance the capacity of Vermont dentists to see more patients, deliver more services and do so at a lesser cost. They appear to believe it is the solution to access and affordability of dental care.

Over the summer VSDS members will be receiving a more detailed summary of workforce issues; the May 14 forum presentations, discussions, and updates about the work of the VSDS Subcommittee on Dental Access, Workforce and Prevention. If you would like to help with the work of this VSDS subcommittee please send an email to ptaylorvt@aol.com