

# Mythbusting

## Alaska DHAT



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Mary Williard, DDS  
North Dakota Oral Health Summit  
Ramkota Hotel, Bismarck, ND  
August 1, 2016

# Disclaimer

I have no conflicts of interest nor am I providing any endorsement of products.

And...



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Mythbusters Adam and Jamie  
Discovery Channel



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PLAUSIBLE

Photo BY [JAMES HIBBERD](#) • [@JAMESHIBBERD](#)  
Entertainment Weekly



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Do you know any dental therapy **myths**?



From Little Shop of Horrors  
[www.screeninsults.com](http://www.screeninsults.com)



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# Myths:

- We don't need to change how dentistry is delivered in the US.
- Those who want care can access it.
- We just have a maldistribution of dentists.
- If Medicaid would just pay more, more dentists would accept it.







John Spink-copyright

<http://www.ajc.com/news/cherokee/thousands-line-up-for-1101295.html>



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# Spirit Lake Pediatric Dental Day



<http://www.pediatricdentistrytoday.org/2012/March/XLVIII/2/news/article/39/>

Pediatric Dentistry Today, AAPD  
March 2012 Volume XLVIII Number 2  
By Jan Silverman



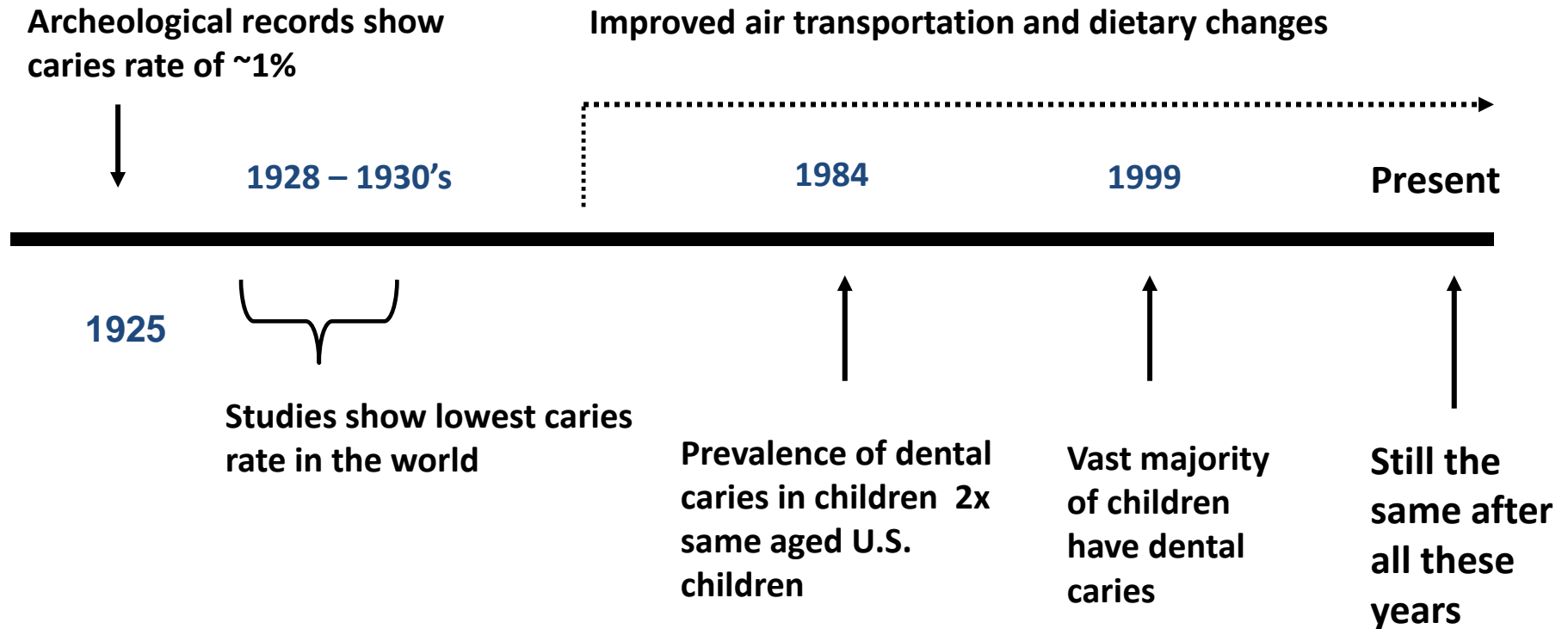
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# History of Dental Caries in Alaska Native People



Price, WA. 1939. *Nutrition and Physical Degeneration*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Lemon Grove, CA.



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52 million Americans did not access a dentist  
in the past year- our system is broken.

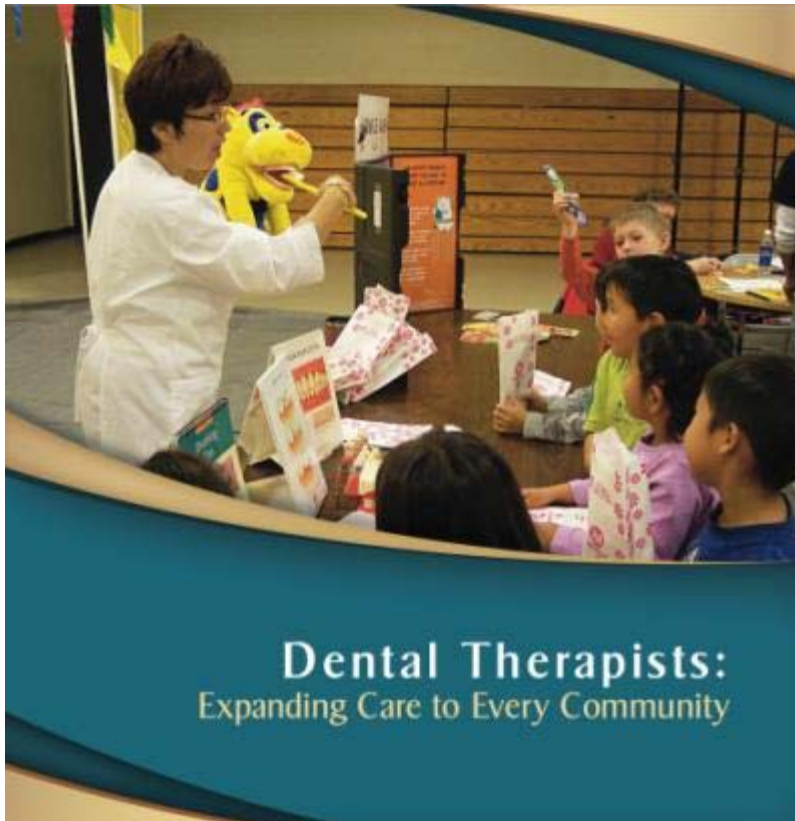
AI/AN adult dental patients suffer disproportionately from  
untreated dental caries, with twice the prevalence of  
untreated caries as the general U.S. population and more  
than any other racial/ethnic group. \*

\*IHS Data Brief, March 2016,  
Results of the 2015 IHS Oral Health Survey  
Drs. Phipps and Ricks



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# Dental Therapists: A Definition



## Primary oral health care professionals

- Basic clinical dental treatment and preventive services
- Multidisciplinary team members
- Advocate for the needs of clients
- Refer for services beyond the scope of the dental therapist's practice.\*

\*SASKATCHEWAN DENTAL THERAPISTS ASSOCIATION





# DHAT Scope of Practice

## 2 year educational program

Diagnosis and Treatment  
Planning, Prevention,  
Basic Hygiene,  
Radiographs,  
Infection Control,  
Restorative,  
Pediatric,  
Urgent Care,  
Extractions,  
Community Projects,  
Clinic Management,  
Equipment Repair and  
Maintenance,  
Referral Process

- **All ages**
- **General Supervision**
- Part of a **team** of dental and medical providers



DHAT, Ben Steward, examining patient

# Myths:

Dental therapists are going to be practicing independently with minimal education!

Dental therapists wouldn't be able to manage a medical emergency in the operator

Dental therapist will harm their patients when things like a root tip breaks off



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# FACTS:

- Dental therapists take the same American Heart Association Provider course as dentists.
- Dental therapists malpractice= \$100-150/year
- Dentist malpractice= \$500-1500/year
- 10 years of DHAT practice in AK, no reports of patient harm



# How Supervision of a DHAT Works

- Education
- Communication  
– Telehealth
- Teamwork
- Regulations



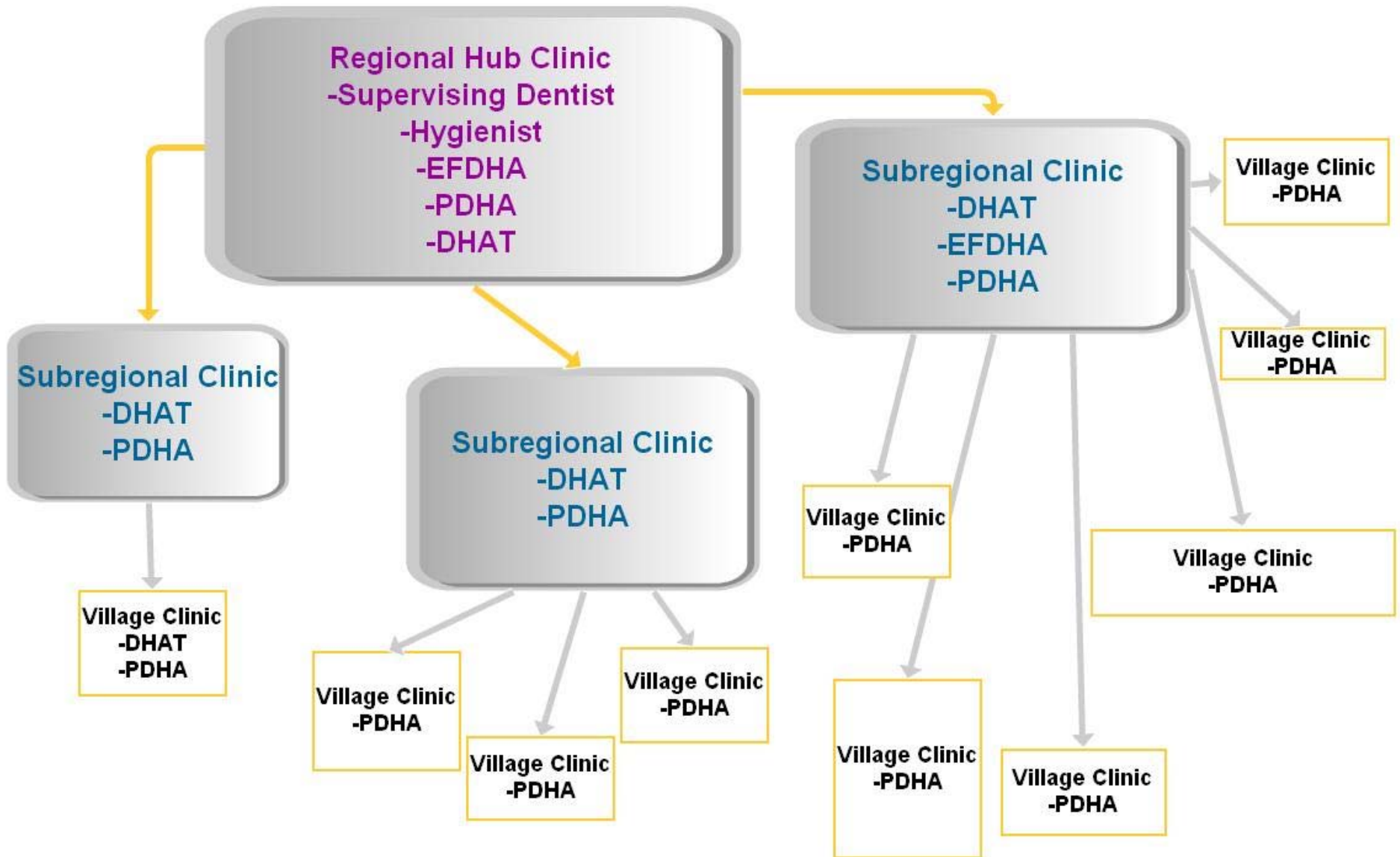
DHAT Ben Steward in pre-clinical lab with mock Telehealth case on monitor



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# DHAT as part of a dentist led team





- Regulations require a supervisor to:
  - Know the standards
  - Work within the tribal health system
  - Be in contact/ accessible
  - Regularly observe skills
- Each program develops a process by which supervision takes place and is recorded
- Best practices are shared

## Checks and Balances



Dentist Supervisor Douglas White with DHAT  
Marian Petla, Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation



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# Myth:

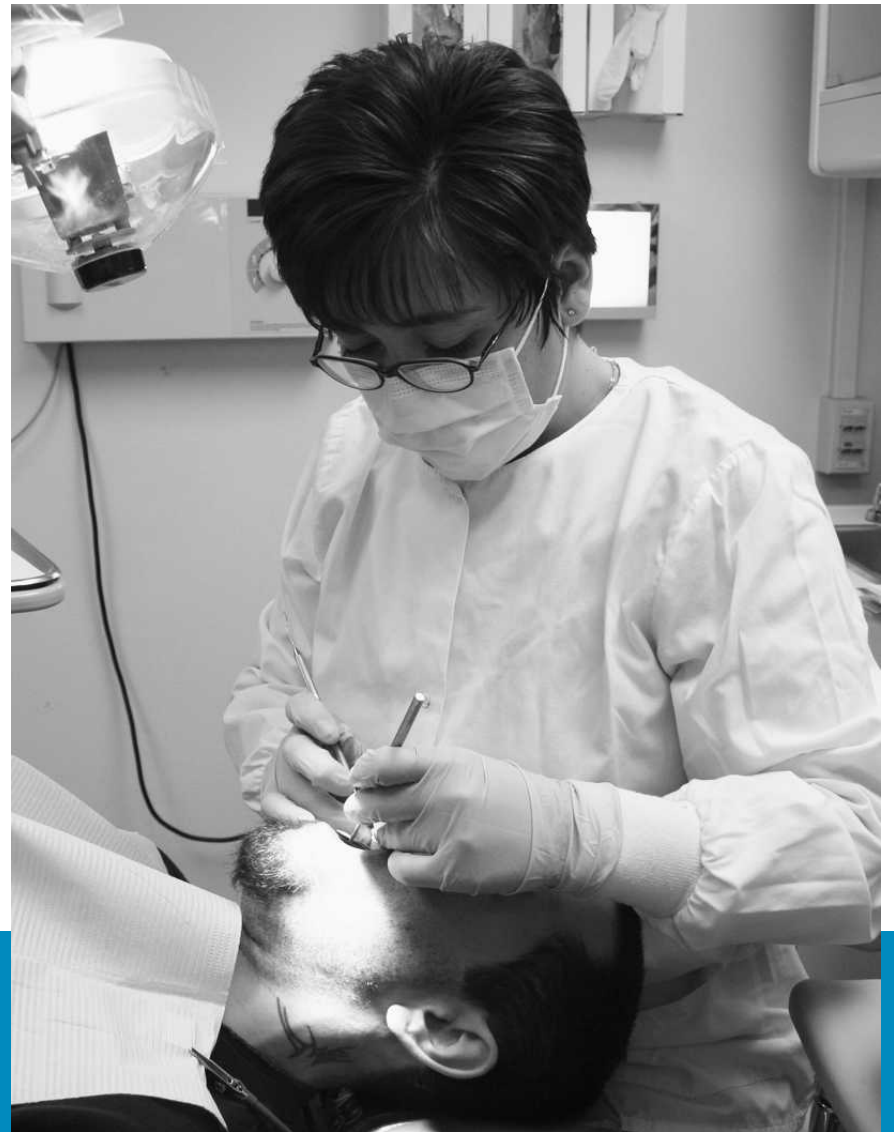
Patients only want to see a dentist.



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# Improved Access, Improved Care

- 40,000 people in rural AK now have direct access to care
- Living and working in communities
- Continuity of care
  - Higher level of care



DHAT Aurora Johnson, NZ  
Educated



BUSTED



32 certified  
DHAT  
practicing  
in Alaska,  
some for  
more than  
10 years.

American Academy of Dental Therapy  
Annual Meeting- March 2012



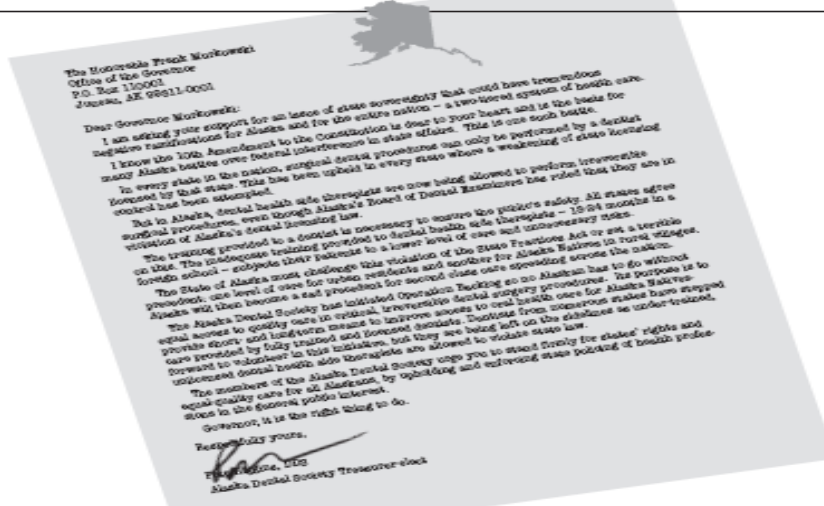
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# Governor Murkowski 2nd class dental care for Alaska Natives deserves a ferocious reaction!



No Alaskan should face irreversible dental surgery by an unlicensed therapist with no dental degree. Alaska law is being broken unnecessarily.

**Myth:**  
Dental  
Therapist  
provide  
substandard  
care



Alaska Dental Society, Inc. • 9170 Jewel Lake Road • Anchorage, Alaska 99502-3303  
Pursuing policies that enhance the well-being of Alaskans.

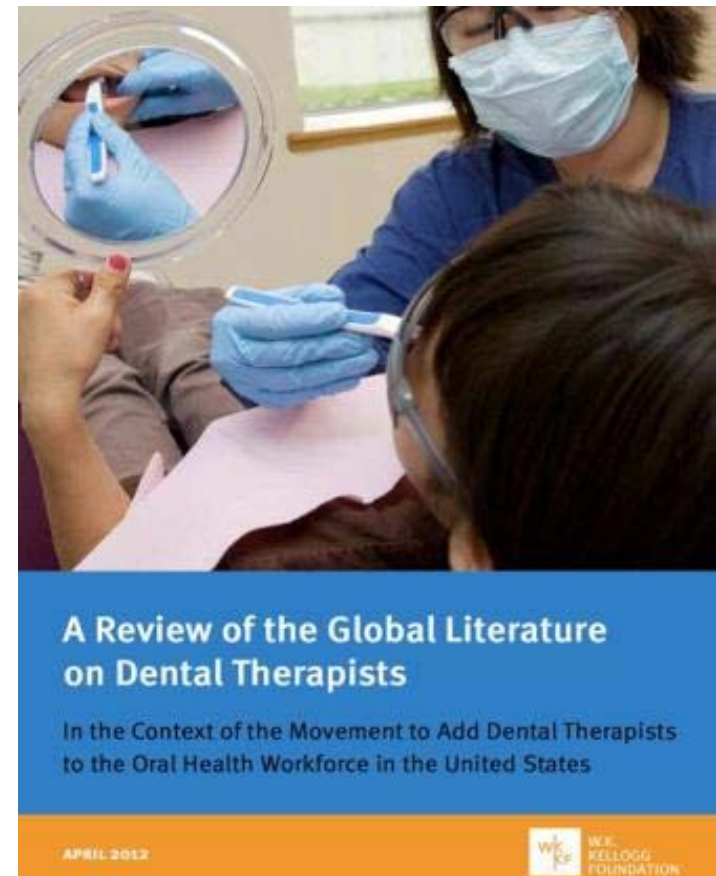


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# “A Review of the Global Literature on Dental Therapists”\*

## Dental Therapists:

- Decrease cost of care
- Improve access to care
- Provide care safely
- Public values the role of dental therapists
- Traditionally 2 years education



<http://www.wkkgf.org/news-and-media/article/2012/04/nash-report-is-evidence-that-dental-therapists-expand-access>

\*Prepared by: David A. Nash, Jay W. Friedman, Kavita R. Mathu-Muju, Peter G. Robinson, Julie Satur, Susan Moffat, Rosemary Kardos, Edward C.M. Lo, Anthony H.H. Wong, Nasruddin Jaafar, Jos van den Heuvel, Prathip Phantumvanit, Eu Oy Chu, Rahul Naidu, Lesley Naidoo, Irving McKenzie and Eshani Fernando

Supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation



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# Research Triangle Institute Clinical Evaluation<sup>1</sup>



- Summary of findings
  - Technically competent
  - Providing care safely and appropriately
  - Successfully treating cavities and helping relieve pain for patients without previous access to regular care
  - High patient satisfaction
  - Well accepted in AK tribal villages



\*“Evaluation of the Dental Health Aide Therapist Workforce Model in Alaska Final Report” Prepared for: W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Rasmuson Foundation, Bethel Community Services Foundation. Prepared by: Scott Wetterhall, MD, MPH, James D. Bader, DDS, MPH, Barri B. Burrus, PhD, Jessica Y. Lee, DDS, PhD, Daniel A. Shugars, DDS, PhD, MPH. RTI International 3040 Cornwallis Road Research Triangle Park, NC 27709. RTI Project Number 0211727.000.001



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We cannot  
drill our  
way to oral  
health

## Myth:

Dental  
therapists do  
not provide  
prevention  
services

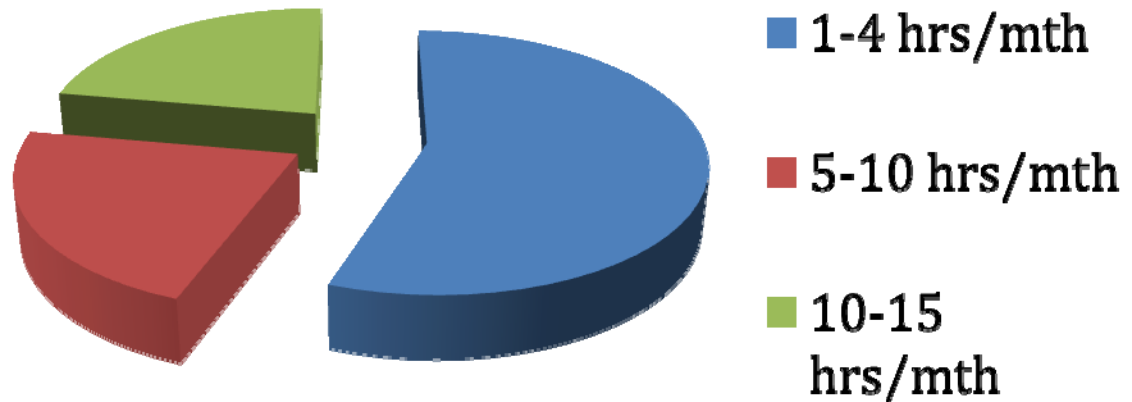


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Encouraged to “put down the hand instruments” and provide community education on healthy behaviors and dental care.

## Patient education



55% spend 1-4 hours per month;  
22% spend 5-10 hours  
22% spend 10-15 hours per month on education.

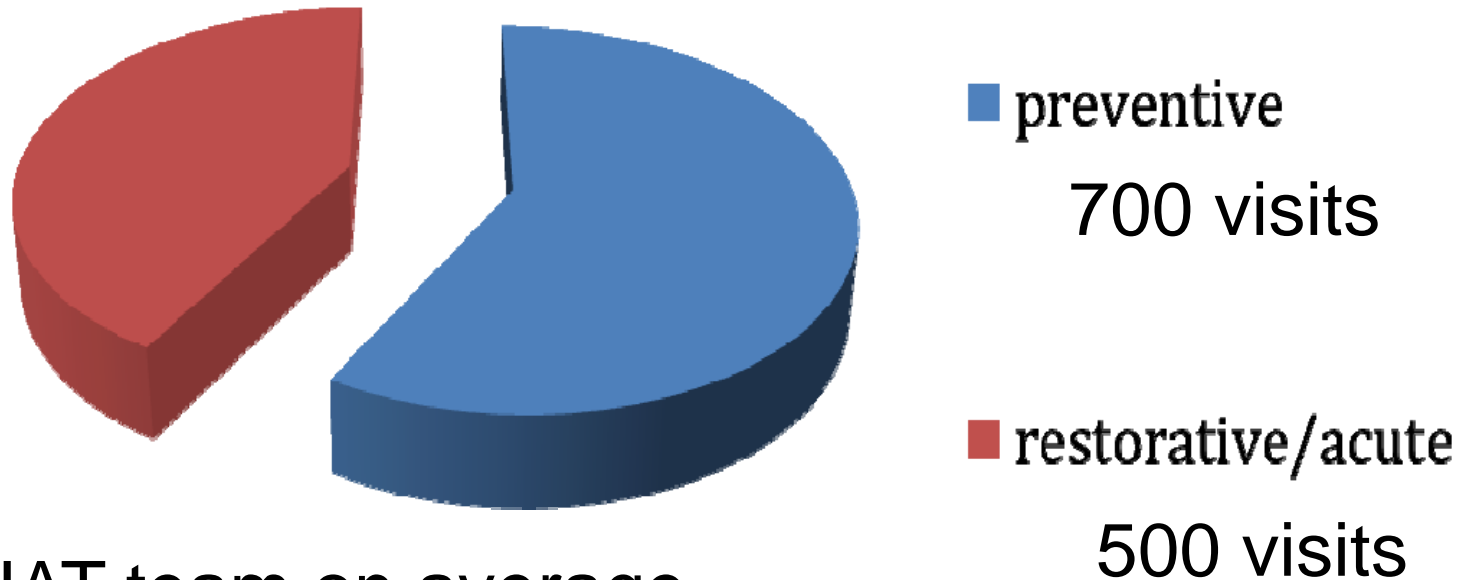
From ANTHC Consultant Survey of AK Tribal Dental Directors

Scott and Co. Consulting



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## Patient visits



Each DHAT team on average, provides care to 830 patients during approximately 1200 patient encounters (or visits) each year.

**From ANTHC Consultant Survey of AK Tribal Dental Directors**

Scott and Co. Consulting



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# Mushing for Brushing



# Head Start Oral Health Education



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# ECC Education for Medical Providers





# Myth:

More education is needed to produce competent dental providers.



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# Different Providers

# Different Education

## DHAT

NEED TO KNOW

Limited scope, 46 procedures

Supervised

Prevention oriented team approach

Accessible to students in target populations

Culturally competent

Patient centered

## DENTIST

NEED to know+ nice to know

Large scope, 500+

Team leader

Surgically oriented

Education is difficult to access, especially for minorities

Struggling to address cultural competency

Practice centered

# Alaska DHAT Educational Program information:

First year: 40 weeks

Second year: 39 weeks

Total: 79 weeks (3160 hours)

## Curriculum Break-down first year

Biological Science: 30%

Social Science: 10%

Pre-clinic: 40%

Clinic: 20%

## Curriculum Break-down second year

Biological Science: 15%

Social Science: 7%

Pre-clinic: 0%

Clinic: 78% (1215 hours)

## Curriculum Break-down two years

### combined:

Biological Science: 22.5%

Social Science: 8.5%

Pre-clinic: 20% (632 hours)

Clinic: 49% (1548 hours)



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# Dental Therapy Education: How much is enough?

- Historically- 2 years
- Trend- 3 years for dually qualified Hygiene/Therapist internationally
- My recommendation: one 2-year program with multiple entry points and prior learning credit.

Education is more than a luxury; it is a responsibility that society owes to itself. ~Robin Cook

PicsMeme.com



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2 year

BA/MA

RDH+MA



Driven to Discover

Metropolitan  
State University



Scope



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# Building Momentum for Dental Therapists



Updated May 2016



CONFIRMED



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## OUR VISION:

Alaska Native people are the healthiest people in the world.

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