

Dental assistant legislation bad for patients

To the Editor:

I'm proud to have practiced dentistry in Warroad for over 25 years.

In all this time, I have never seen a piece of "health care" legislation from state lawmakers as unsafe, untested and unwise as what's being proposed in St. Paul right now.

Anyone who visits a dentist needs to know the truth about what's going on in St. Paul that could drastically lower the quality of dental care in Minnesota.

To have the privilege of being a dentist in Minnesota, one must graduate with a four-year degree from college, pass a tough entrance exam, submit a lengthy written application, include several letters of recommendation, and undergo an interview. Once accepted into an accredited dental school, it is another four years, which includes book learning and tightly supervised "hands on" training. There are numerous written examinations and practical exams to show that you are qualified to treat patients. Then,

there are National exams to pass after graduation from dental school and strict state Minnesota Board of Dentistry guidelines to get a license. After all this, there are regular ongoing continuing education requirements to keep current.

Some in Minnesota government want to create a new dental position that will be allowed to perform the same non-reversible, complicated, surgical and restorative procedures in your children's mouths and in adult mouths that now only a dentist can do. Yet, lawmakers will require less than one third the education of a dentist!

Lawmakers are experimenting with patients' health. This position does not exist anywhere else in the United States! This is a dangerous experiment for all Minnesotans!

Lawmakers are saying this measure will "expand dental access for the disadvantaged in Minnesota," and it will save money. There is no proof that this measure would solve the access to care problem. There is

also no proof that these measures will save any money.

Some in government want to allow under-trained people to work in your mouth so that they can say they've done something to "improve" dental health care. Allowing less educated and poorly qualified people to perform complicated invasive surgical procedures is not solving the access problem, it's creating a dangerous, irreversible and possible life threatening situation. It is not a solution. It's a nightmare.

No one deserves substandard dental health care, regardless of their socio-economic status.

Tell your state representative and state senator to stop this bill. Keep patients' safety first!

Thank you.

Sincerely,
 Dr. Michael Thiele
 Warroad

