

April 24, 2020

North Dakota Department of Health
State Health Officer Tufte
600 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck ND, 58505-001

State Health Officer Tufte,

On behalf of the North Dakota Dental Association and our Board of Trustees, we wish to send our most sincere thanks to you and all those you lead for your leadership through the COVID-19 pandemic. Your work, the work of your team, and of all those on the frontlines fighting this pandemic has, without a doubt, saved lives and will continue to save lives of North Dakotans. Following your leadership, our Board of Trustees has taken several steps to help ensure the health and well-being of North Dakotans.

The NDDA believes in the clinical expertise, education and judgment of our over 400 member dentists across the state of North Dakota and will advocate that any and all practice decisions autonomously flow from our member dentists. All of our member dentists have been thinking, planning and preparing about what will be their “new normal” for providing dental care in our state. **At the NDDA, our number one priority is and always will be the health and safety of our dentists, their staff and most importantly their patients.**

NDDA Membership and dental offices across the state made the difficult, but correct decision, to limit care out of initial precautions due to this pandemic. While the initial limitations were valuable, the majority of dental treatment is now being delayed without any current timeline in which dentists can plan to resume care. **Further delay will cause further harm to patients.** In addition, those in greatest need of dental care are often the same patients with underlying health conditions that make them more vulnerable to COVID-19 complications. **Regular, preventative, and supportive dental care is an important part of maintaining their overall health.** We are substituting one health care crisis for another, resulting in more serious long-term effects.

Dental offices routinely manage the risks of infectious disease transmission and are capable of adapting to these new risks as highly trained experts in dental medicine. Potential encounters at dental offices also present less risk to the community because these contacts are well-documented and easily traced, unlike the random encounters at grocery stores and takeout restaurants. For the good of the community, we must now take steps to begin providing additional essential dental care.

The NDDA has provided and will continue to provide many “Reopening Dental Offices” resources to our membership for their review if providing care during this COVID-19 pandemic. Membership have already received “ADA Interim PPE Guidelines,” “ADA - What to Do if Someone on Your Staff Tests Positive for COVID-19,” and coming Monday, April 27, 2020 the “ADA Return to Work Toolkit.” **All NDDA member dentists have been strongly recommended to review all upcoming content, presentations, resources and guidance if they are providing any dental care through this pandemic.** Practices are encouraged to research and exceed standard infection control procedures and implement policies to minimize patients’ time and

possible contact in the waiting rooms. **If at any point, any dental provider feels it is best to limit or close their practice, the NDDA strongly encourages the dental provider to follow their clinical judgment.**

Through our unified decisions and actions, we have signaled, and Governor Burgum has noticed, the proactive intelligent decisions and preparedness from the dental community to handle this pandemic. Since the beginning of this pandemic the NDDA has been in constant communication and working with the you, the North Dakota Board of Dental Examiners, the North Dakota Department of Health the American Dental Association and most importantly Governor Burgum.

Further the NDDA will focus on and provide to members the most accurate and up to date health and safety resources when it comes to providing any dental care through this COVID-19 pandemic. **It is our intention that all NDDA members will keep up to date, informed and follow the highest health, safety and infection control standards.**

Dentists across the state continue to do what they feel is best for North Dakota, take care of North Dakota. This is a group of highly trained healthcare professionals who have been willing and ready to follow recommendations put forth on how to best take care of our great state. **We will continue to advise them in a fashion that allows them to be advocates for North Dakota and this great state's well-being.** We will continue staying up to date on the latest recommendations from the American Dental Association and from Governor Burgum. We are tasked with using that information to appropriately advise dentists on how to proceed, a task that pales in comparison to the duties of you and your team. Again, thank you for all you have done for North Dakota. Like Governor Burgum has said many times, we are in this together. If there is anything the NDDA can do to help, do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Respectfully,



William Sherwin
Executive Director