

April 27, 2021

Ms. Colleen Kiel
Director, Strategy & Planning
Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health
393 University Avenue, 21st Floor
Toronto ON M5G 2M2

Ms. Allison Henry
Director, Health Workforce Regulatory Oversight Branch,
Ministry of Health
1438 University Ave, 10th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

Dear Ms. Kiel and Ms. Henry,

On behalf of Ontario's dentists and dental students, I am writing to request that dentistry be included in the list of training programs that permit 50 persons in an instructional space. Strict capacity limits have been put in place for post-secondary institutions, with exemptions for certain programs that support the health care workforce response. Unfortunately, dental programs were not included in the exemptions.

The Ontario Dental Association (ODA) represents over 10,000 dentists working across the province on the frontlines, delivering care during a very difficult time. That care prevents patients from presenting at hospitals with emergencies and compromising health system capacity. The exclusion of dentistry from the list of prescribed programs will impact the ongoing care of Ontarians. Dentistry requires significant hands-on training and if this matter is not addressed by May of 2021, students may not be able to enter the next year of their programs and graduations could be delayed.

As you have heard from the dentistry schools, the current 10 person in-class limit is having a significant impact on first-and second-year dentistry students' ability to engage in hands-on instruction in simulation labs. Students must participate in thousands of hours of hands-on instruction, practice procedures and techniques on life-like mannequins to ensure they develop the core competencies required to practice supervised procedures on live patients in their third year. Due to the capacity restrictions, these students have not been able to meet necessary requirements.

Dentistry programs take the safety of their students seriously. All participants in these simulations wear full clinical personal protective equipment (PPE) and maintain physical distancing due to a large simulation space. The University of Toronto, for example, has a 5,000 square foot simulation lab. As students are also involved in providing basic patient care, the majority of second-year students have already been vaccinated against COVID-19, with first-year students eligible for vaccines starting in May.

The Minister of Health has recognized that dentists provide an essential service and are essential partners in the fight against COVID-19. Dentists are a part of the continuum of care and are needed to maintain the health of Ontarians and preserve health system capacity by keeping dental patients out of hospitals.

As we do our part in the fight against COVID-19, we ask that you support our efforts by ensuring that dentistry is added to the list of prescribed programs in *O.Reg. 82/20*.

Sincerely



Dr. Michelle Budd
Chair, Health Policy and Government Relations Advisory Committee

c Hon. Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health

December 18, 2020

The Hon. Ross Romano
Minister of Colleges and Universities
438 University Ave, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

The Hon. Christine Elliott
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
777 Bay St., 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Re: Support the Healthcare Workforce Response by Ensuring the Availability of Dental Graduates During COVID-19

Dear Ministers Romano and Elliott,

On behalf of Ontario's dentists, I am writing regarding the in-person capacity limits for postsecondary education institutions. As you know, strict capacity limits have been put in place for those institutions in Stage 1/Lockdown Regions, but exemptions have been provided to prescribed programs that support the health-care workforce response. Unfortunately, dental programs appear to have been overlooked when the list was drafted and were not included in the exemptions.

The Ontario Dental Association (ODA) represents over 10,000 dentists across the province who work on the frontlines delivering dental care. Dentists are concerned that the exclusion of dentistry from the list of prescribed programs will impact the ongoing care of Ontarians as dentistry requires significant hands-on training. To avoid this, we are requesting that dentistry be added to the list specified in *O.Reg. 82/20*.

Ontario's dentists have worked hard throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to provide the highest level of care to their patients. We appreciate that the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health has recognized that dentists are an essential service and continue to practice during lockdowns, maintaining the health of Ontarians. Dentists are a part of the continuum of care in the province and our work also preserves health system capacity by keeping dental patients out of hospitals. Our colleagues in hospital dental departments also provide services supportive of contemporaneous medical care, including cardiovascular surgery, cancer care and time-sensitive surgery. These patients require urgent dental assessment and treatment before their surgery. In addition, studies have shown the impact of poor oral health on mortality in the elderly, particularly those in nursing homes and intensive care units. Frequent professional dental care reduces the progression or occurrence of respiratory diseases among the high-risk elderly, which is particularly relevant given the COVID-19 pandemic. Dentists are clearly essential components of the health-care system and dentistry programs, which support the future health of Ontarians, should be treated in the same manner.

As we do our part in the fight against COVID-19, we ask that you support our efforts by ensuring that dentistry is added to the list of prescribed programs in *O.Reg. 82/20*. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue further with you and your staff.

Sincerely,



Dr. Lesli Hapak
Chair, Board of Directors and
President
Ontario Dental Association



Dr. Daniel Haas, DDS, PhD, FRCD(C)
Professor and Dean
Faculty of Dentistry
University of Toronto



Dr. Bertha Garcia, MD, MEd, FRCPC
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