



Ohio Director for GLAO
Dr. Dale Anne Featheringham, DDS, MS

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Dear Ohio GLAO Members,

There are two things that I frequently say when describing advocacy issues in our profession: first, they come at you like a speedball, not a wiffleball, and second, “advocacy never sleeps”- meaning that our advocacy team has to be ready at any time to deal with an issue. Well, both of these sayings came true for Ohio in September when I got word that **the Ohio State Dental Board was planning to take a vote to drastically change the language that protects specialty status in Ohio.** I was on a trip to Switzerland, and got word that an advocacy issue was happening at 1 am Swiss time. Needless to say, there was no sleeping after that! I immediately contacted our AAO advocacy team, and our hired Ohio lobby team (paid for by your dues dollars through the component legal support fund), and they responded in under 10 minutes...on a Friday night!

Since then, a lot has happened, but here is the short version:

- 1) The Ohio State Dental Board (OSDB) was threatened with a lawsuit from an “implantologist” (note that this isn’t currently a recognized specialty in dentistry) who wants to advertise as a specialist.
- 2) The OSDB sought the advice of a legal firm that recommended that they change the specialty language to avoid legal problems.
- 3) The proposed language would allow a dentist to claim they are a “specialist” if they have been “certified by a certifying board”. This means that anyone could create an entity and offer orthodontic education, and then offer certification, and the dentist could then advertise as an orthodontist as long as they list the organization that certified them. *Sounds crazy, right?* Furthermore, the proposed rules would rescind longstanding rules defining the legal business structures under which dentists can offer dental care. These rules provide protections against private equity firms and other non-dentist owned corporations from directly dictating dental care. In both instances, patients lose protections and the ability to evaluate who is the most qualified person to provide their orthodontic care.

What action is being taken to prevent this from happening to Ohio patients and orthodontists?

Due to the upset by all specialty groups, the fact that the way that this all happened was a potential violation of the Ohio legislative rulemaking process, and strong testimony by Dr. Henry Fields and the Eric Richmond from the Ohio Dental Association, the OSDB instead decided to create an “interested parties working group” that will explore this issue and attempt to come up with common-sense language defining who can call themselves a dental specialist in the state of Ohio. Dr. Henry Fields and I, along with Adam Braundmeier of the AAO, and our Ohio lobby team of Aaron Ockerman and Dave Battocletti, Isaac Northrop, and members of the Ohio Dental Association legal team, will attend these meetings. These meetings will take place on December 2nd, and January 13th. **Our goal will be to tie specialty status designation to completion of an accredited post-doctoral program or an accredited dental residency program in the area of interest.** This is already done in several states, and provides a previously tested legal and clearcut way to make the designation.

Will common sense prevail in Ohio? This is yet to be determined, but please contact me if you’d like to know how you can help. Also, please watch for email petitions from the AAO on this issue, and continue to donate to the PAC to help build relationships with our legislators so that we are ready for all things impacting patient safety and the fair and ethical practice of orthodontics.

Respectfully submitted,

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