

AGD Advocacy Conference October 29, 2022

The Academy of General Dentistry held an Advocacy Conference Meeting on October 29, 2022. Dental Practice Advocacy was the theme for the meeting. The conference meeting reviewed and discussed the many issues facing the dental profession. The AGD and other professional organizations are constantly advocating for the dental profession and for patient oral health. AGD leaders meet with other stake holders including the ADA and it's many committees, other dental professional associations, government agencies, legislative representatives, and dental insurance representatives. The AGD is a strong voice for general dentists.

A brief introduction to the world of AI (artificial intelligence) and AuI (augmented intelligence) was made. AI and AuI have usefulness in dental clinical treatment in many ways. However, there is a benefit in insurance claims processing to simplify the claims adjudication process. Other benefits include real time claims processing, reduction in overhead, and increased efficiency. The AGD is advocating for software standardization, software transparency, and information on how provider and patient behavior will be used.

Medical Loss Ratios (MLR) is the share of insurance premiums spent on claims and efforts to improve quality of care versus the share spent on administrative costs, and profits. When MLR was first introduced approximately 80% of the insurance premium was mandated to be spent on consumer benefits. If the 80% threshold was not met, then the balance was refunded to the consumer.

Both the AGD and the ADA gave financial support to promote the Massachusetts Ballot Question 2 in the recent election. Massachusetts Ballot Question 2 passed. Dental plans in Massachusetts will be required to pay 83% of premiums for dental claims. Dental plans that do not pay 83% of premiums for dental claims will be required to refund the difference to the policyholders.

Expansion of Medicare to include dental benefits was defeated. The AGD led the effort to prevent the inclusion of dental benefits in Medicare. Medicare dental benefit expansion proposal would not encourage provider participation or address low-income seniors immediate oral health needs. Low reimbursements do not incentivize provider participation. Administrative requirements are burdensome. Simply stated, dental providers will decline to participate in the program.

Dental therapists are not going away. Dental therapy bills have been introduced in multiple legislatures over the years. The AGD continues to oppose dental therapists. The Wisconsin Dental Association and the Wisconsin AGD defeated a dental therapy bill in Wisconsin. The usual argument for dental therapists is that dental therapists will provide dental care in underserved areas. However, as in Minnesota the majority of dental therapists are in the major metropolitan areas. The bills legislate the formation of dental therapists but fail to require dental therapists to serve in underserved areas. Thus the intent of dental treatment for the underserved is not mandated and not fulfilled.

The AGD staff monitors and communicates with a lengthy list of federal and state regulatory agencies, insurance associations, ADA committees, and other dental professional associations about dental issues. We as individuals are unable to advocate for the dental profession. Without a national organization speaking on our behalf, we are at the mercy of external forces. AGD membership supports advocacy. We, general dentist members, benefit from the AGD's efforts on our behalf.

Stay up to date on AGD's latest advocacy efforts at www.agd.org/advocacy

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