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TDA Successfully Champions Dental Hygienists' Local Infiltration Rule at the TSBDE

The Texas State Board of Dental Examiners (TSBDE) adopted the dental hygiene local infiltration anesthetic rule during its May 3, 2024, meeting. This finalizes the Texas Dental Association's (TDA) historic legislative effort during the 2023 legislative session to authorize properly trained and educated dental hygienists to administer local infiltration anesthetic to patients under certain conditions.

The new rule outlines the procedures and requirements for dentists in Texas to delegate the administration of local infiltration anesthetic to dental hygienists holding a TSBDE-issued local anesthetic certificate. Below is a brief rule summary:

Definitions: Local infiltration anesthesia is defined as injecting a local anesthetic near the nerve endings of the teeth and supporting oral tissues.

Delegation: Dentists can delegate local infiltration anesthetic to a dental hygienist with a current TSBDE-issued certificate under direct supervision. The delegating dentist must be physically present where the procedure is occurring and "continuously aware of the patient's physical status and well-being."

Standard of Care: Local infiltration anesthetic can only be administered to patients 18 years or older who are not sedated beyond nitrous oxide and only when the hygienist is providing hygiene services within the dental hygiene scope of practice. Specific informed consent, including the risks, is required.

Certification Requirements: Hygienists must meet education, training, and examination criteria. To qualify for a certificate, hygienists must do the following: (1) complete a 32-hour TSBDE-approved local infiltration anesthetic education course taught by a CODA-accredited education institution; or (2) show proof of successful completion of a CODA-accredited dental hygiene program that includes the didactic and clinical education required in the rule; or demonstrate that (3) during the year preceding the application the hygienist was authorized to administer a local anesthetic agent by a branch of the US military; or (4) during the year preceding the application the hygienist was authorized to administer a local anesthetic agent by another state having clinical and didactic education requirements substantial equivalent to Texas' requirements.

Education and Examination: The 32-hour TSBDE-approved education course must be taught by a CODA-accredited educational institution and include 20 hours of didactic education covering the subjects listed in the rule, along with 12 hours of clinical instruction. Course participants will need to fulfill the course's clinical experience requirements, demonstrating successful administration of local infiltration anesthetic as defined in the rule, and they must pass both didactic and clinical examinations.

Continuing Education: To keep a local infiltration anesthesia certificate current, the hygienist must complete not less than 2 hours of continuing education (CE) biannually in the administration of, or medical emergencies associated with, local anesthesia specific to the procedures to be performed by the dental hygienist administering the local anesthesia. This CE is in addition to the CE required for a dental hygienist to renew their license.

Reporting Obligations: Hygienists must report any patient deaths or hospitalizations possibly linked to anesthesia administration to the TSBDE within specific times.