

**GEORGIA BOARD OF DENTISTRY**  
**Laser Committee Conference Call**  
**2 MLK Jr. Drive, SE, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor, East Tower**  
**Atlanta, GA 30334**  
**November 28, 2023**  
**5:00 p.m.**

**The following Committee members were present:**

Ms. Misty Mattingly, Chair  
Dr. Larry Miles  
Dr. David Reznik  
Dr. Debra Wilson

**Staff present:**

Eric Lacefield, Executive Director  
Max Changus, Senior Asst Attorney General  
Brandi Howell, Business Support Analyst I

**Visitors:**

Iris Suk Mason  
Sherryl Burns

**Open Session**

Ms. Mattingly established that a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 5:16 p.m.

**Introduction of Visitors**

Ms. Mattingly welcomed the visitors.

**Discussion Topic**

The Committee discussed the use of a dental laser by dental hygienists. Ms. Mattingly discussed the research she compiled which consisted of dental laser research specific to tasks delegated to dental hygienists, and laser use by hygienists in each state from the ADHA. She stated that she drafted a proposed rule for the Committee to consider as well as completed the rule promulgation questions.

Ms. Mattingly stated that currently Rule 150-5-.03(11) reads in part, "...Only dentists licensed by the Georgia Board of Dentistry shall be authorized to perform procedures involving laser technology which alters tissue, creates thermal effect, or is intended to cut, coagulate, photocoagulate, vaporize, or ablate essentially any soft or hard tissues of the body..." She further stated that currently there are only seven (7) states that prohibit dental hygienists from using lasers. She explained that dental hygienists utilize lasers for ablation of the tissue in the pockets for gingivitis and periodontal therapy as well. She mentioned that she proceeded with drafting a rule to have something to start with and the Committee could edit it as needed.

Dr. Reznik commented that this topic was somewhat controversial in Georgia just like allowing dental hygienists to administer local anesthesia, and allowing general supervision. He stated that the Committee needed to hear feedback from the public. He further stated that he felt it was more about sterilizing the pockets. He added that he was unsure about ablating tissue. Ms. Mattingly responded by stating that she understood. She stated that she meant to say sterilizing the pocket rather than ablate. She explained that dental hygienists are allowed to do curettage, which would be similar to utilization of a laser. She added that it would be an uninitiated tip, not a tip that would be initiated to cut tissue. Dr. Reznik inquired if that was in the proposed language. Ms. Mattingly responded affirmatively.

Dr. Reznik stated that he felt there would be support for this. He added that his only other concern was to take the proper precautions for use of a laser. Ms. Mattingly agreed and stated that was something that could be added to the draft.

Dr. Reznik stated that in dealing with precautions and dental unit water lines, people know they are supposed to do it, but they do not. He further stated that any extra precautions such as protecting someone's eyesight was very important and including language regarding following safety guidelines was something that he would insist on. Ms. Mattingly responded by stating that the proposed draft states, "All lasers must be used in accordance with accepted safety guidelines." She added that if Dr. Reznik wanted to specify what those safety guidelines were, that is something that could be included.

Dr. Reznik stated that, while he has not had a chance to thoroughly review the proposed language, he felt if it made offices more efficient he would be in favor of it. He stated it was a skillset that could be utilized.

Dr. Wilson inquired as to the percentage of states that were allowing this. Ms. Mattingly responded by stating 86%. She added that there were seven (7) states that do not allow it. She referred the Committee to the information from the ADHA regarding dental hygiene laser use and requirements by state.

Dr. Reznik commented that Ms. Mattingly provided a remarkable amount of information. He stated that the Committee should get a sense of what the public and the Board members thought about it.

Mr. Changus inquired if Ms. Mattingly felt the proposed language would work with the current language she cited in Rule 150-5-.03, or did she feel there would need to be a change to Rule 150-5-.03 to allow the proposed draft to move forward. Ms. Mattingly responded by stating that she felt it would not be in the best interest to change the way the rule was currently written for dentists. She stated that she thought the proposed draft would add something for the dental hygienists; however, the Committee could very easily make that one change. She further stated that most states just have generalized language stating the dental hygienists and dentists can utilize lasers, but only after receiving the appropriate training for such.

Ms. Suzanne Newkirk spoke to the Committee. She stated that she was laser certified in Washington. She provided input regarding usage of a laser tip for laser bacterial reduction, which is a non-initiated tip. She stated that in regard to laser curettage, dental hygienists were authorized to provide that per Georgia rule. She added that the laser is a tool that would allow dental hygienists to do that, but that would use an initiated tip to help remove necrotic tissue. She continued by stating that it would be the same as using a hand instrument to remove the tissue. She explained that it was a non-surgical procedure which was within a dental hygienist's scope of practice. Ms. Newkirk commented that in the states that authorize dental hygienists to use a laser with an initiated tip, it is for services or duties that are only within their scope, not surgical. She stated that the dental hygienist provides non-surgical periodontal therapy utilizing the laser within their scope of practice. She further stated that the dentist uses a laser assisted new attachment procedure, for example, which is an initiated tip, but it is also a surgical procedure. Ms. Newkirk added that in other states dental hygienists also provide biostimulation or low level laser therapy. She explained that the laser does not touch the tissue; there is no laser plume which comes out of that. She added that dental hygienists must be certified and most certification courses are between 8-12 hours and provide a standard proficiency which includes all levels of safety. She continued by stating that safety standards must be followed such as using protective eyewear, putting up a sign stating that a laser was being utilized, etc.

Dr. Reznik commented that he understood what Ms. Newkirk stated about dental hygienists using the surgical/non-surgical tip. He inquired as to what would prevent someone from taking advantage of that as the dental hygienist would be using the same tool a surgeon would use. He stated that he would rather see

the safest procedure instituted first. Ms. Mattingly responded by stating that it is not being used at that high of a level to be able to do those types of procedures. In response to Dr. Reznik's question about what would prevent someone from doing that, Ms. Mattingly stated that could be speaking to anything as that is the reason there are laws and rules for licensed professionals.

Ms. Mattingly read the following language from the proposed draft:

- (1) A dental hygienist, under the direct supervision of a Georgia licensed dentist may use a dental laser limited to the use of bacterial reduction/disinfection of the gingival sulcus at settings that preclude hard and soft tissue removal except for incidental gingival curettage, if the following criteria are met.

Dr. Reznik agreed with the proposed language since it included the term "incidental gingival curettage". He stated that Ms. Newkirk provided great information, but she spoke to curettage, not incidental curettage. Ms. Mattingly responded by stating that Ms. Newkirk was very well versed regarding lasers. She further stated that the draft did include "incidental gingival curettage" as she was trying to be conservative in that regard. Dr. Reznik responded by stating he was good with the language. Ms. Mattingly stated that she wanted to clean up the draft prior to the Committee voting on it.

Ms. Mattingly read the remaining language of the proposed draft:

- A. Prior to utilizing a dental laser, the dental hygienist must successfully complete interactive didactic and clinical training which includes laser safety, infection control, patient management and the operation of the specific laser(s) utilized in the dental practice. Training must be a minimum of 8 hours of instruction, and must be obtained through a course provided or recognized by any of the following organizations, a successor organization, or upon approval of the GA BOD:
  - a) The Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA);
  - b) The American Dental Association (ADA) Continuing Education Recognition Program (CERP);
  - c) The Academy of General Dentistry (AGD) Program Approval for Continuing Education (PACE); or
  - d) The American Medical Association (AMA).
  - e) A dental hygienist who has more than three (3) years of experience using a dental laser is exempt from the training requirements set forth in this section provided that the three (3) years of experience is obtained prior to January 1, 2022.
- B. A dental hygienist utilizing a dental laser must maintain evidence of training as required which must be prominently displayed at the location where the dental hygienist is authorized to utilize a dental laser.
- C. A dental hygienist utilizing a dental laser, other than for the use of non-adjustable laser units used for the purposes of diagnosis and curing, must submit such evidence to the Board upon request.
- D. All lasers must be used in accordance with accepted safety guidelines

(2) When utilizing a dental laser pursuant to this Section, the dental hygienist must document the following information, at a minimum, in the patient's record:

- a) the type of laser utilized, to include the wavelength of the laser;
- b) the settings used, such as pulse or continuous wave, and the power setting;
- c) local anesthesia used, if any; and

Ms. Mattingly stated that one item not mentioned in the draft is ulcers. She further stated that she had a laser used on an ulcer and it was very easy and pain-free. Dr. Reznik responded by stating that he would not be opposed if it were an aphthous ulcer, but not a herpetic ulcer. He added that if it were a herpetic

ulcer, he would prefer the patient take an antiviral medication for treatment. He stated that he did understand the use of a laser in treating these lesions.

Dr. Miles commented that he felt a dental hygienist should be able to use a laser especially if they are skilled in scaling and root planing. He stated that he personally has used lasers on periodontal pockets and has had fabulous results with it and would be fine with dental hygienists utilizing a laser for such.

After further discussion, Mr. Lacefield inquired if the Committee wanted to add language concerning safety guidelines to the proposed draft to be considered at the next meeting as well as review Rule 150-5-.03 Supervision of Dental Hygienists. The Committee agreed.

Mr. Lacefield asked the visitors on the call to send an email via the "Contact Us" portal on the website if he/she would like his/her name reflected as being in attendance in the minutes.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 5:46 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Brandi Howell, Business Support Analyst I

Minutes edited by Eric R. Lacefield, Executive Director