



Ohio Director- Dale Anne Featheringham

2/14/25

Hello Ohio Orthodontists,

Ohio continues to be embattled in a specialty advertising issue with the Ohio State Dental Board. Under threat from a lawsuit by a group of general dentists who have taken extra training in placing implants, the board stated in September that it was voting on a potential change in the specialty advertising language in Ohio to allow these general dentists to advertise as specialists. Minimal notice was given to the Ohio Dental Association or any of the specialty groups about this proposed role change. This issue was being raised at an interesting time, since the Ohio State dental board has two open positions that would normally be filled by specialist.

Due to protests from the Ohio Dental Association and other specialty groups (including oral surgery, endodontics, periodontics and pediatric dentistry and orthodontics), the board decided to suspend voting on the rules and instead formed a special interest group to study this issue. The AAO has worked hard to collaborate with the Ohio Dental Association and the other specialty groups to testify at two open hearing meetings, held on December 2, 2024, and January 13, 2025.

I was happy to be able to attend these hearings, and to testify at the December meeting. The AAO's position has been in line with that of the Ohio Dental Association, which is that a dentist should only be able to advertise as a specialist if they have completed at least two years of training in a COTA approved residency. This position is backed by a survey that was done by the Ohio Dental Association in 2018 and published in a peer reviewed journal, which showed that the public assumes that a "specialist" is a dentist that completed at least 2 years of additional training in a specialty area at a residency program. **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.**

In one of the hearings, the point was made that specialists in orthodontics receive 4000 hours of training, and oral surgeons can receive upwards of 16,000 hours of training to become specialists. These numbers were in stark contrast to the amount of training that was discussed by the implant general dentist group, which was about 800 hours of training (although the website of the American Academy of Implant Dentistry states that you can become a "diplomat" of their organization with as little as 400 hours of postdoctoral or continuing education training- far less than what specialists that complete an accredited residency fulfill to achieve specialty status).

The AAO continues to work with the Ohio Dental Association, the Ohio Association of Orthodontists, other specialties, and our state and national lobby team to fight this issue. More updates to come, but please look out for notifications targeted to members of the Ohio Association of Orthodontists, asking you to sign in support of holding the line on these specialty advertising rules.

Respectfully submitted,
Dale Anne Featheringham

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