

Oral Health in Washington

An Interactive Symposium

Event Summary

Background

In December of 2013, after over one year of review of evidence and expert testimony, the Washington State Board of Health (SBOH) adopted seven recommended oral health strategies. The purpose was to promote strategies that improve the oral health of Washington residents and guide the SBOH rule and policy development activity.

To engage the community in these recommendations, stimulate activity within the strategies, and foster collaboration, the SBOH, in partnership with the Washington Dental Service Foundation and the Empire Health Foundation held two symposia in April of 2015. Each symposium included keynote and panel presentations as well as significant time for attendees to share ideas regarding implementation of the seven strategies in small group break-outs. 140 community stakeholders attended.

Symposium 1: April 21, 2015, Tukwila, WA

Eighty-eight people participated. Attendees represented a broad array of constituencies including dental and medical providers, community-based clinics, advocates for children's health, advocates for seniors' health, state agencies, and more.

Morning Keynote: Dr. Robert Crittenden, Health Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor.

Panel presenters: Jeff Hummel, MD, Qualis Health; Elya Moore, PhD, Whatcom Alliance for Health Advancement supporting the North Sound Accountable Community of Health; and Maureen Linehan, Executive Director of Aging and Disability Services.

Lunch Keynote: Beth Truett, President and CEO of Oral Health America

Symposium 2: April 30, 2015, Spokane, WA

Fifty-two people participated. Attendees represented a broad array of constituencies including dental and medical providers, community-based clinics, advocates for children's health, advocates for seniors' health, state agencies, and more.

Morning Keynote: Russell Maier, MD, Family Physician and Director of the Central Washington Family Practice Residency.

Panel presenters: Torney Smith, Deputy Director of the Spokane Regional Health District; Ann Hurst, Chief Mission Integration Officer for Providence Health Care; Kristen West Fisher, Vice President Empire Health Foundation.

Lunch Keynote: Matt Jacob, Director of Communications and Outreach, Children's Dental Health Project.

Breakout Session Summary

Participants were invited to participate in three rounds of breakout sessions in which small group discussions were held in order to generate ideas on how to implement the seven strategies.

Topic: Health Systems

Support policies and programs that improve oral health for Washington state residents.

Theme Across both Symposia

- Test and expand models which promote the ability for Washington's health systems to focus on population-based prevention of oral disease.

Suggestions from Tukwila participants

- Expand the Access to Baby and Child Dentistry Program (ABCD) to improve access to prevention and care for other high-risk populations including adults
- Refocus from restorative care for individuals to preventive care for populations. Develop a pilot program with adult at-risk populations to demonstrate cost savings.
- Increase the ease and availability of preventive services by promoting collaboration between medical and dental. Remove restrictions to dental auxiliaries working and billing for work in primary care practice.
- Track health metrics that include oral health in order to build public will for an expanded Medicaid dental program.

Suggestions from Spokane participants

- Partner with national advocacy organizations like the AARP to advocate for dental coverage within Medicare.
- Establish a data clearinghouse to share data within and between health systems in order to ensure stronger data collaboration.
- Evaluate and establish incentives for dental providers to serve high-risk populations.
- Develop a formal partnership between WIC and ABCD to ensure all WIC providers are aware of ABCD and know how to connect families with the program.
- Workforce development (e.g. oral surgeon scholarships, mid-level dental providers)
- Delivery system improvements such as:
 - Establishing a process for interdisciplinary case review for preventive services
 - Foster and support best practices for engaging patients and promoting behavior change

Topic: Interprofessional Collaboration

Incorporate oral health improvement strategies across healthcare professions (such as medicine, nursing, social work, and pharmacy) and systems to improve oral health knowledge and patient care.

Themes Across both Symposia

- Develop and foster model(s) of care delivery that support collaboration between dental and medical providers.
- Develop consistent oral health messages that can be used across disciplines (WIC, Head Start, etc.)

Suggestions from Tukwila participants

- Develop a business model to support interdisciplinary collaboration, particularly exploring combining visits for medical, dental, WIC, and pharmacy.
- Address cultural barriers that may be inhibiting collaboration between medicine and dentistry
- Establish oral health leadership at a high level within one or more state agencies (HCA, DOH, Governor's cabinet)

Suggestions from Spokane participants

- Develop solutions to improve the effectiveness of referrals/transitions of patients between medical and dental providers.
- Promote all healthcare professionals to work at the top of their scope and training. Identify ways to break down silos between medical and dental.

Topic: Fluoridation

Expand and maintain access to community water fluoridation for the health benefit of children, adults, and seniors.

Theme Across both Symposia

- Inform the public and dispel myths about fluoridation.

Suggestions from Tukwila participants

- Develop speaker's bureau to protect currently fluoridated communities, promote new systems and market community water fluoridation as an important public health measure
- Distribute materials to proactively dispel myths about water fluoridation Foster the ability for public health agencies that have a role in oral health and fluoridation to work more closely together (e.g. Department of Health Oral Health and Drinking Water divisions)
- Institute mandatory reporting for water systems considering a decision to de-fluoridate to improve transparency and reduce public harm.

Suggestions from Spokane participants

- Train providers to effectively and proactively engage with patients on fluoride and fluoridation.
- Use social media to counter the fear found elsewhere on the internet.
- Use data to demonstrate that everyone is impacted by the costs of dental disease, build the case for fluoridation.
- Examine the feasibility of fluoridating smaller water systems one at a time. Could be implemented with less funding and public paranoia.

Topic: Oral Health Literacy

Improve the capacity of people to obtain, understand, and use health information in order to increase their acceptance and adoption of effective oral health focused preventive practices.

Theme Across both Symposia

- Through a collaborative multi-organizational process develop and make available uniform and widely agreed upon messages and communications tools for multiple audiences that are focused on prevention.

Suggestions from Tukwila participants

- Reinforce connection of oral health to overall health and wellbeing; happiness, employment, feeling good, and other things people value.
- Create a state Dental Director position, or expand role into health secretary.

Suggestions from Spokane participants

- In oral health communications, use plain language and stress prevention
- Communicate to decision makers in an appealing way to gain support and funding for oral health.
- Train dentists and medical providers to do motivational interviewing in order to promote behavior change around oral health.

Topic: Sealants

Provide school-age children with access to dental sealants to prevent cavities.

Themes Across both Symposia

- Expand ABCD to include 6-9 year olds in order to incentivize delivery of sealants and other preventive services for this age group.
- Strengthen connection between sealant providers and schools. Build the case with schools that oral health is connected to learning. Ensure schools understand the opportunities with sealant programs. Recruit dental providers (sealant programs and Community Health Centers) to partner with schools.

Suggestions from Tukwila participants

- Share Washington State guidelines for school based sealant programs more broadly, and explore development of a more robust program planning and implementation guide. Leverage the Department of Health to disseminate this information.
- Increase surveillance for sealants.

Topic: Surveillance

Monitor trends in oral health indicators to ensure policies and programs are advancing the oral health of Washington residents, including those most at risk for poor oral health outcomes.

Suggestions from Tukwila participants

- Further analyze the data we have, better understand the causation of oral health disparities.
- Require schools to participate in oral health surveillance activities.
- Develop and fund a more robust state oral health program.
- Put data into action through focusing on vulnerable populations, education, advocacy and identifying gaps. Partner with the Accountable Communities of Health to look at key oral health metrics to track for community health.

Suggestions from Spokane participants

- Need for additional oral health data and information for:
 - School age children 6-18
 - Local communities (e.g. county profiles)
 - Types of services and procedures (ER visits, preventive, treatment)
- Better data sharing resources and collaboration efforts:
 - Centralized reporting mechanism
 - Comprehensive metrics for oral health outcomes
- Tell the story: determine and disseminate the long term outcomes of programs (e.g. ACBD)

Topic: Workforce

Develop health professional policies and programs that better serve the dental needs of underserved populations.

Suggestions from Tukwila participants

- Develop comprehensive support for the oral health workforce including economic, mentoring and business practices.
- Creative education structures including entry and exit pathways and emerging models.
- Focus on community retention, particularly for rural areas.
- Develop an information hub as a resource on dental workforce issues.

Suggestions from Spokane participants

- Partner with after school programs to expose kids to dental careers
- Work to make Medicaid provider friendly; increase reimbursement and decrease administrative barriers
- Increase opportunities for expanded education for dental professionals

Attachments

- A. Participant lists
- B. Agendas
- C. Speaker presentations