

April 29, 2020

Robert M. Harkins, DMD  
President  
Mississippi State Board of Dental Examiners  
600 East Amite Street, Suite 100  
Jackson, MS 39201

Dear Dr. Harkins:

On behalf of the Mississippi Society of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (MSOMS), the professional organization that represents more than 40 oral and maxillofacial surgeons (OMSs) in the state, I would like to thank the Board for its leadership during the current COVID-19 pandemic. While we appreciate the Board's guidance and efforts in developing its "Return to Work Guidelines" we have concerns that the document – specifically the sections that define "essential services" – are focused on general dental care and do not account for OMS treatment.

As you are aware, OMSs are surgically and medically trained dental specialists who treat conditions, defects, injuries and esthetic aspects of the mouth, teeth, jaws, neck and face. After earning a dental degree from an accredited four-year dental school, OMSs complete a minimum of four years of hospital-based oral and maxillofacial surgery residency training, which includes rotations in such areas as general surgery, anesthesia, and clinical research. As the surgical branch of dentistry, our members are providing frontline response to address the needs of emergent dental patients during the pandemic. Our goal is to ensure that dental patients are treated outside of the emergency rooms so our nation's hospitals are free to respond to pandemic patients. These dental emergencies – which can be life threatening if left untreated – include treatment of dental pain, abscesses, facial trauma as well as dental treatment required prior to critical medical procedures.

In looking at the guidance issued for Phase 2 – specifically the Association of Dental Support Organizations Guidelines of Essential vs. Non-Essential Dental Procedures document – only extractions and implants are accounted for under "oral surgery," but as we know, the practice of OMS includes more than just these procedures. We ask the Board to amend its guidance to reference the "[ADA's Interim Guidance for the Management of Emergency and Urgent Dental Care](#)," which is inclusive of the full scope of dental practice. We also ask the Board to allow for individual practitioner judgement in determining what is an essential procedure for a patient as individual circumstances can vary greatly and cannot necessarily be accounted for in an algorithm. By making these small changes we can ensure that we can continue to phase-in treatment in the state while providing necessary care to the citizens of Mississippi.

On behalf of MSOMS, I am grateful for your leadership during this most challenging time and I thank you for your consideration of our concerns. For questions or additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at [kylehuntmd@gmail.com](mailto:kylehuntmd@gmail.com) or 601-383-4257.

Sincerely,

Kyle T. Hunt, DMD  
President  
Mississippi Society of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons