

DezBaa A. Damon-Mallette, DMD

Clinical Director (General Dentistry)
Nizhoni Smiles - Shiprock, NM to begin Oct-Nov 2013

Previous Employers & Title:
Staff Dentist
Sage Memorial Dental Clinic
Ganado, Arizona

Deputy Director
Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corp.
Bethel, Alaska

NM Economic & Rural Development
Committee
Pueblo of Santa Clara, NM
October 10, 2013

Personal Background

- Full Navajo originally from Aztec, NM and Mexican Water, AZ
- Undergraduate: Arizona State University
- Dental school: Arizona School of Dentistry & Oral Health
- Practicing dentistry for about 6 years
 - All 6 years were in service for American Indian and Alaskan Native communities

Dental Therapists in Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta

- 25 DTs certified in all of Alaska
 - 4 DTs in Preceptorship
- 9 DTs working with YKHC
 - 8 Certified & in villages
 - 1 in Preceptorship
- Alaska's Program: 1st year in Anchorage, 2nd year in Bethel
 - 6-month preceptorship with YKHC, then assigned to villages
 - Addressing preventive and routine restorative & extraction needs
- YKHC DTs have started to organize
 - Work with a dentist in a way that provides them an avenue for communication in regard to:
 - Villages' dental needs (Compassion and leadership for their community)
 - Continuing Education (their desire is to be a safe, effective provider)
 - Fosters Native people to direct their own care; take leadership

Important Factors for a D. Therapists program

1. **Culturally-Competent Provider**
 - Patients respond favorably to providers of their background
 - Oral Health Instruction and treatment options, possibly better explained
2. **Strong Support/Mentoring System**
 - Continued close mentoring
 - Biweekly, monthly, quarterly, etc.
 - Treat patients based on Dental Therapist's treatment plans/scope of practice
 - Set up the Dental Therapists for success
 - Help community gain confidence in the Dental Therapist as a provider

Important factors cont.

- DT provide “continuity of care” as dentists come and go
 - Area is rural and very few providers stay long-term
 - Unfortunately, some dental providers only practice in these areas to fulfill a goal of paying off their loans; No real interest in being involved with the community
- Changes in the Practice of Dentists
 - Able to focus on higher level services for patients
 - Using the full extent of their license with D. Therapist’s help
- Evolution of dental therapist program in Alaska
 - The program has been running now for 10 years
 - 35 DTs have completed their education (11 NZ, 24 AK)
 - 82% Retention Rate: dental therapists remain practicing in home and underserved communities, long-term personal commitment to community
 - No Malpractice case reported in the 10 years

- Thank you -

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