

Questions Regarding the CITA Hygiene Examination

- 1) *What were the factors that precipitated an increase of over \$500.00 in the examination fee?*

In general, it should be recognized that all of the states in CITA are moving from an examination process previously administered by independent state boards of dentistry rather than regional testing agencies. Historically, regional testing agency fees have been considerably higher than independent state board fee structures. Being a part of an independent state administered exam, candidates have previously enjoyed exam costs which were offset by general board operating revenues. However, this has been framed against a backdrop of limited recognition of the independently administered examination and subsequent limited mobility. The new paradigm of regional and national mobility through regionally administered examinations breaks down previous barriers of recognition and limited mobility, but carries with it a new ledger of higher associated expenses and examination costs.

The dental hygiene examination administered by CITA was developed under the auspices of the American Board of Dental Examiners (ADEX), with representation and input from CITA, a number of other regional testing agencies and independent states. Central to this unprecedented level of cooperation was the development and evolution of a national clinical examination that would be recognized by each state board of dentistry as fulfilling the clinical examination requirement for licensure in their respective state. The ADEX Board of Directors appointed a Hygiene Examination Committee whose charge was to develop content, criteria and scoring for the new national hygiene examination. The Dental Hygiene Committee of ADEX consisted of hygienists and hygiene educators from across the nation who reviewed existing hygiene clinical and computer examinations and used existing as well as new testing constructs to develop the national examination.

The fee for the national examination was set by the ADEX Board of Directors, with input and consultation with the Dental Hygiene Committee members and the representatives from existing state and regional testing agencies.

One of the conditions for membership in ADEX, and concomitant recognition and acceptance of the national hygiene examination, is that all who are members of ADEX, and have signed membership agreements, are to uniformly administer the examination and charge a uniform fee for the examination. The fee for the examination was set by ADEX after discussion of the existing regional testing agencies as to what fee they were currently charging, and what additional

expenses would be required in the delivery, administration and reporting of the new dental hygiene examination. Aside from the additional expenses in the administration of the examination, each test administering agency, who is a member of ADEX is contractually obligated to send a portion of each examination fee to ADEX for examination development expenses, and to help support ADEX organizationally on the national level.

Therefore, the central factor in the fee increase was that it was a requirement for membership in ADEX; that all test administering bodies charge a uniform fee as set by the ADEX Board of Directors. For most regional testing agencies the fee increase was nominal over what those agencies had been charging in the past. For states which had been independently administering the dental hygiene examination, and who had general board revenues to offset exam administration expenses, the fee represented a departure from traditional, historic fee structures.

- 2) *We understand that CITA has withdrawn from the ADEX process. Does CITA plan to rejoin the ADEX process and what will this mean for candidates who take the CITA examination?*

Although CITA states have currently withdrawn from the ADEX process, CITA is hopeful that ADEX will address CITA concerns regarding representation on committees, release of examination materials and governance issues so that the present impediments preventing CITA membership and participation can be resolved. If recognition of the CITA administration of the examination is to occur, with the associated mobility realized, it is important that CITA continue to comport with existing ADEX guidelines in examination administration, including the required ADEX fee structure.

Should CITA determine that the ADEX process is untenable, then CITA will have some latitude in determining what an appropriate fee structure may be for the CITA dental hygiene exam and the subsequent administration of the same. However, with the present budget of CITA, and the expense of delivering the dental hygiene examination, it is doubtful that for the immediate future significant reductions in the fee structure will be forthcoming.

- 3) *Some concern has been expressed that the new fee is a mechanism for the dental boards, or its members to realize an economic gain? What is the organizational structure of CITA and is its Board of Directors or Officers receiving economic income from the administration of the examination?*

CITA was organized and incorporated as a nonprofit 501C-3 corporation. CITA consists of representatives from member states who vote on matters brought before the membership. There is a Board of Directors and Officers who serve to govern and carry on the day-to-day activities of the organization. CITA Board Members and Officers are not required to be current state board members.

CITA Board Members and Officers expend considerable amounts of time in their service to the citizens of our states, and to the profession but do not receive compensation for their positions as Board Members or Officers. Their time is donated and provided without compensation. CITA Board members may participate in the examination process along with other dentists and hygienists as Clinic Floor Monitors or Examiners. Participants in the administration of the CITA examination receive an honorarium and an allowance for travel, meals and lodging. CITA does employ staff personnel to provide administrative and clerical duties within the CITA office.

4) *What is the relationship between CITA and the state boards of dentistry?*

It is important to distinguish that state dental examining boards are typically considered a part of state government. The boards as state agencies have delivered the clinical licensure examinations as a service to the citizens of the state and the profession. In the new national/regional format state boards of dentistry will no longer be administering the dental hygiene examination. Although state board members will assist in the delivery of the examination, the examination will be administered by CITA, an outside independent regional testing agency similar to the Northeast Regional Board (NERB), the Western Regional Examination Board (WREB), or the Southern Regional Testing Agency (SRTA).

Member states and their State Boards of Dentistry have agreed by contract to accept the results of the CITA administered examination, however the state boards of dentistry do not have the specific authority to set what CITA, or any other regional testing agency for that matter, charges for the development and administration of a licensure examination. The fee is determined by the regional testing entity and is a function of exam development expenses, administration expenses, psychometric expenses, staff expenses and examiner travel, honorarium and lodging expenses incurred in the administration of the examination.

5) *If this large increase is needed to meet expenses, does this mean that the (Boards) have been losing thousands of dollars the last few years they gave the exam?*

While each state board of dentistry's circumstances may differ, it is likely accurate to state that typically the expenses in delivering an examination are not covered by the fees generated by examination applicants. The income generated by the licensure renewals fees of existing practitioners is used to offset the shortfall of administering the examination. In addition, aside for the direct cost of administering the examination such as hotel, travel, honorarium and meals, the indirect expenses such as exam development, psychometric or measurement specialist consultation expenses, technical manual development, and post examination analysis are usually absorbed by boards as general operating costs, which again are paid from general board revenues generated by practitioner licensure renewal. This is one of the many reasons regional testing agencies have

for numerous years required a greater examination fee than those states who have independently administered their examinations.

- 6) *In their Spring Semester, our senior students are facing National Boards, final exams, completion of clinical requirements, and finding patients for licensure examination. They are now in the process of preparing for the licensure examination but have insufficient information as to requirements, patient type, use of Cavitrons, etc. When will such information be made available?*

The CITA Hygiene Examination Committee has met to finalize the content, criteria and scoring of the CITA hygiene examination. Final information and the candidate manual will be available the first part of January, and may be obtained by a written request to the CITA office or by visiting the CITA website at www.citaexam.com.

- 7) *Are there any hygienists on the CITA board? If not, why not since CITA administers a dental hygiene licensure examination?*

The CITA Board of Directors was organized subsequent to its Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation. The Board of Directors is comprised of dentists from the member states of CITA.

The development of the hygiene examination, determinations of content, scoring and criteria are functions of the CITA Hygiene Examination Committee, which is composed of dental and dental hygiene representatives from the member states.

- 8) *How was the CITA exam designed? Who participated in the design? Was the Dental Hygiene National Board Examination referenced when the CITA examination was constructed? Were other regional board examinations referenced during exam construction?*

The hygiene examination utilized by CITA embodies the examination as developed by the participating hygienists who helped develop the ADEX examination. This examination was the result of input and guidance from hygienists and hygiene educators from across the nation. Regional test agency representation of hygienists came from CRDTS, NERB, CITA and SRTA.

- 9) *How is the CITA examination like and different from the NCSBDE dental hygiene licensure examinations of recent years?*

The CITA examination will be similar in some respects and in others differ from the examinations conducted in the individual states comprising CITA. The CITA exam will have a written component, as well as a clinical component. The clinical component will test additional areas of expertise and knowledge, and the exam will test calculus identification as well as removal. Please consult the CITA

website after January 1, 2006 for more specific information regarding the CITA examination.

10) What are other regional testing agencies charging for their hygiene examinations?

Currently NERB, CRDTS and WREB are charging \$700 plus a variable school facility fee. SRTA is currently charging \$650 plus a variable school facility fee.

Many schools charge a fee for the use of the school and the school's personnel during the course of the examination. This fee is paid directly to the school.

11) If CITA withdraws from ADEX, what states will recognize the results of the CITA examination?

Currently the member states of CITA are North Carolina, South Carolina and Mississippi. CITA examinations results are recognized as fulfilling the clinical examination requirements for licensure in those states. At this time, CITA is also finalizing paperwork with Louisiana and Puerto Rico who should have recognition by next year, along with Alabama. As CITA moves forward soliciting new states as members, we are asking all members to accept the results of the CITA exam from this date forward. That means that those member states who join later will accept the results of a CITA exam taken now. Mobility will grow as new states accept the results of the CITA administered exam.

Additionally, acceptance of CITA results is a state board right, and CITA will continue to petition individual state boards of dentistry who are not, and may not become CITA members, to accept the results of the CITA exam for licensure in their states.

12) It has been stated that North Carolina was asked by the legislature to join a regional exam agency. Is this true? If so can the legislature mandate to the regional testing agency what fees they can charge for the examination?

No. Subsequent to the Institute of Medicine's Task Force on Access to Care, the Task Force developed 23 recommendations to be submitted to the Legislature regarding mechanisms which might address access to care issues. Recommendation number eleven of the final task force document stated:

- *Recommendation #11: The NC State Board of Dental Examiners should be required to evaluate the competencies required by the different regional examinations to determine if these examinations ensure the same level of professional competence required to pass the North Carolina clinical examination. The NC State Board of Dental Examiners shall report its findings to the Governor and the Presiding Officers of the North Carolina General Assembly no later than March 15, 2001. If the Board concludes that participation in one or more regional examinations would not ensure*

mini-mum competencies, the Board shall describe why these other examinations do not meet North Carolina's standards and how the quality of care provided in North Carolina could be affected negatively by participating in such examinations. If the Board finds these exams to be comparable, procedures should be developed for accepting these examinations as a basis for North Carolina licensure in the year following this determination.

The North Carolina State Board of Dental Examiners reported its findings to the Governor as directed and recommended. At that time, the Board did not recommend that North Carolina join a regional examination agency. However, subsequent to further study by the Board, and subsequent to the Board's participation in the development of a national exam, the Board elected to join a regional test administration agency to administer an examination, and to accept the results of that examination for fulfilling the clinical examination component for licensure in dental hygiene. This decision has effectively addressed Recommendation # 11 of the Institute of Medicine's Task Force on Dental Care Access.

The regional testing agencies, including CITA, are private, independent nonprofit corporations separate from individual state legislature authority. Additionally, testing agencies do not receive subsidy from state legislatures and must therefore charge for the administration of the licensure examinations as may be required to meet the expense of delivery of those examinations as any private nonprofit corporation might be empowered.

13) Are funds or scholarships available to help dental hygiene students meet the increased expense of the CITA examination?

It has been suggested that there are monies available in student aid offices for the expense of the licensure examinations. Students should inquire at the Student Aid Office at the institution where they are enrolled to see if funds are available for this purpose.