

April 23, 2020

RE: Governor Brian Kemp's Executive Order and the GDA Board of Trustees Findings and Interim Recommendations to Members and all Georgia Dentists

Dear Valued Member of the GDA and all Georgia Dentists,

During this crisis, the GDA has been advocating non-stop on your behalf with the Governor, the Georgia Board of Dentistry ("BOD"), Georgia Department of Public Health, Occupational Safety and Health Administration ("OSHA"), and also seeking clarification from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC"). A special Task Force on COVID-19 and an Innovation Task Force were formed consisting of your peers who have been diligently working to get you back to full treatment practice. They are reviewing issues such as added compliance costs, safety guidelines, supply chain management, funding for PPE, mask innovation and testing. In addition, your GDA has been continuously supplying free webinars on relevant COVID-19 related topics to assist and smooth your transition.

The GDA's priorities during this pandemic have been the following:

1. Safety of patients and dental team
 - a. Safe return to full dental treatment
 - b. Sourcing PPE at reasonable prices
 - c. Access to rapid testing for patients and dental team
 - d. Information assessment and distribution
2. Economic relief for employer and employee dentists
 - a. Access to grants and low-interest financing
 - b. Urging federal and state legislators to require that business interruption policies cover losses from COVID-19
 - c. Ensuring third-party payers and Georgia dental Medicaid organizations reimburse for emergency procedures performed during the pandemic
 - d. Rapid transition guidance information (webinars, COVID-19 tools, web portal)
 - e. Student debt relief
 - f. Tax relief
3. Emphasizing that dental care is an essential component of health care and the economy
 - a. Utilizing best professional judgement to apply CDC/CMS/OSHA/ADA/GDA guidance
 - b. Commitment to reducing the burden on visits to ERs and urgent care facilities for oral infections and trauma
 - c. Preventing dental emergencies by treating problems in a timely way
 - d. Untreated dental conditions, including periodontal disease, are associated with serious long-term health effects such as oral cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and other inflammatory diseases

All of that has been laser focused on getting you back to full treatment practice safely and to prepare you to resume your care for the oral health of Georgians and to sustain your small business in support of your family and staff.

Board of Trustees Findings and Interim Recommendations:

As you are now aware, on Monday, April 20th, Governor Kemp issued an [Executive Order](#) (the "Order") stating it is time for Georgians to get back to work and specifically referenced dentists. However, after completely vetting the Order, related information, as well as available clinical and professional guidance, your GDA **CANNOT** affirmatively advise you to go back to full practice treatment on April 27 or 30th at this time.

Why? Because the Order, current ADA guidelines and the BOD require dentists in Georgia to follow CDC (inclusive of CMS) guidelines regarding COVID-19. Included with the CDC's current [Interim Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Dental Settings During the COVID-19 Response](#) is a recommendation to limit all non-essential planned surgeries and procedures, including dental, until further notice. However, the GDA's Board of Trustees cannot require you to follow CDC recommendations, nor can it require or tell you when and under what conditions to open your office for full patient treatment. Therefore, we advise you after due consideration of all the information, that you should use your own professional judgment as to whether to follow the Governor's Order when making decisions on safety and opening your office for full treatment. We further recommend that if you decide to open your practice to full treatment that you follow the ADA's COVID-19 [Interim Mask and Face Shield Guidelines](#) and [Interim Guidance for Minimizing Risk of COVID-19 Transmission](#).

GDA Petition to Governor Kemp:

To address the issues and concerns above, on Tuesday, April 21, the GDA presented the Governor with a [petition](#) which raised said issues and respectfully asked him to clarify his Executive Order as it currently conflicts with an existing BOD rule. On April 22, the BOD revised its [statement](#) on COVID-19 and conformed it to the Governor's Order. The change by the BOD is more favorable than its previous COVID-19 statement, but it is still problematic because in conforming to the Governor's Order it still requires dentists to follow CDC guidelines.

In the coming week, we will provide you with some tools and examples of phased office opening processes for your consideration and use. In the interim, we advise you to use the [COVID-19 considerations to reopening dental offices](#) on the GDA website.

In closing, our preference would have been to bring you different news, but our fiduciary duties to you require us to give you the unadulterated truth as we advocate on your behalf. "Tell it to me straight" is always best, and frankly easier to deal with in a crisis, or anytime. Be assured we will continue to keep you updated as developments occur.

Please call me, Frank or any Trustee if you have questions.

Best regards,



Dr. Evis Babo,
President



Frank J. Capaldo,
Executive Director/CEO

The GDA Board of Trustees

cc:

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