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## **FIRST U.S. PRIVATE PRACTICE TO EMPLOY MIDDLELEVEL DENTAL PROVIDER SEES INCREASE IN PROFITS AND ABILITY TO TREAT MEDICAID PATIENTS**

*New Case Studies Highlight Potential of Midlevel Dental Providers to Contribute to The Private Practice Dental Team; Economic Benefits Possible for Public & Private New Mexico Dental Practices*

BATTLE CREEK, Mich., & SANTE FE, N.M.—The first private practice dentist in the United States to add a dental therapist to the team was able to increase profits, see a significant number of new patients, and increase treatment of Medicaid patients. These findings are additional strong support for the viability of dental therapists as a community-based solution to New Mexico’s dental crisis.

Main Street Dental Care in Montevideo, Minn. increased profits by more than \$16,000, handled 27 percent more patient visits, and increased new patients by 38 percent, according to a new report from The Pew Charitable Trusts. Partially funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the analysis also found that the practice increased its Medicaid patient load from 26 percent in 2011 to 39 percent in 2012.

These findings are particularly relevant given the current movement through the state legislature of Health Action New Mexico’s (HANM) Dental Therapist Licensure Act bill. This bill, Senate Bill (SB) 76/House Bill (HB) 306, is alive and moving in both the State House of Representatives and the Senate. It was passed out of the House Health, Government, & Indian Affairs Committee with a unanimous vote this week, and is now up for consideration in the House Judiciary Committee. On the Senate side, SB 76 will be heard today by the Senate Public Affairs Committee.

“This year we are seeing that state legislators are much more informed of New Mexico’s dental crisis,” said Pamela K. Blackwell, JD, Oral Health Access Project Director for HANM. “We are hopeful that they will pay attention to the data that continues to come in, which shows that using dental therapists in public and private practices is an economically-viable business model that generates revenue for local practices.”

More than a dozen states, including New Mexico, are exploring using dental therapists as a way to greatly expand access to dental care. Outside of the United States, dental therapists have been practicing successfully in nearly 50 other countries for the more than 90 years. New Mexico is the 39<sup>th</sup> worst in the nation in the number of dentists per 1,000 people, and this new report, [\*Expanding the Dental Team: Studies of Two Private Practices\*](#), highlights that dental therapists are an economically viable, revenue-generating, community-based solution that would help change these numbers in our state.

“These case studies, as well as other economic analyses of midlevels practicing in Alaska and Minnesota, show the benefits of adding these providers to the dental team,” said Alice Warner-Mehlhorn, program officer at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

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*Health Action New Mexico (HANM) is a Bernalillo-based non-profit organization. Our mission is to achieve affordable, accessible & accountable health care for all people living in the state of New Mexico. Contact HANM: (505) 867-1095, [info@healthactionnm.org](mailto:info@healthactionnm.org) or [www.HealthActionNM.org](http://www.HealthActionNM.org).*