

**OPINION
49-143**

March 2, 1949 (OPINION)

OCCUPATIONS AND PROFESSIONS

RE: Dentists - Dental Hygienist

Your letter of February 28, 1949, addressed to the attorney general, has been assigned to me for attention.

You desire a ruling from this office as to whether or not, under the dental hygienist law, the dental hygienist may apply sodium fluoride to the teeth. You also inquire as to whether or not a dental assistant may apply sodium fluoride to the teeth.

Answering your last question first, will say that under our law there is no provision permitting a dental assistant, whom we take to mean the office girl, to give treatments, and it would naturally follow that she has no authority to administer sodium fluoride.

With reference to your first question, we find that it is generally agreed that sodium fluoride is beneficial to the human system in that it tends to prevent dental decay. In certain western counties in this state there is an ample supply of this element in the drinking water, and it is very noticeable that the condition of the teeth of children in that district is so much better than in the section of the state where sodium fluoride is absent from the drinking water. Communities in the eastern part of the state obtain their water supply from the water shed in that section and are not so fortunate for the reason that the element of sodium fluoride is entirely absent from the water.

The medical profession is agreed that there is no danger in administering sodium fluoride. The difficulty being that in most instances there is a deficiency.

We call your attention to section 43-2003 of the 1947 Supplement, which is a part of chapter 298 of the 1947 Session Laws. That section relates to dental hygienists and their employment and practice. Said section reads in part as follows:

"Such hygienist may make x-ray pictures of the teeth and jaws; may clean and polish teeth; may assist in the administration of gas, ether and general anesthesia as applied to dentistry; may make instrumental examination of the teeth for cavities and chart the result of such examination and findings; and may prescribe or apply ordinary mouth washes of soothing character, and apply and use such antiseptic sprays or washes as her employer dentist may direct; * * *."

You will note that a dentist hygienist, under the above-quoted law, is authorized to apply and use antiseptic sprays or mouth washes as her employer dentist may direct. We feel that the beneficial properties of sodium fluoride is such that there can be no question by what a dental hygienist may administer sodium fluoride in this

state.

Before sending this letter out we shall submit it to Dr. R. O. Saxvik, State Health Officer, for approval or disapproval.

WALLACE E. WARNER

Attorney General