



April 16, 2020

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam  
Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia  
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor  
1111 East Broad St.  
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Governor Northam,

We are writing to you representing the Virginia Dental Association (VDA) and to thank you for your leadership as we navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. As you continue to manage the pandemic, we urge you to ensure that all Executive or Emergency Orders are consistent with the guidance and recommendations from the American Dental Association (ADA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to avoid confusion among practitioners.

The VDA recommended the postponement of all non-emergency care on March 15 and we have continued to closely monitor the clinical needs of the patients our members serve.

For example, we have been tracking:

- Delay in prevention, diagnosis and treatment of dental disease will lead to more invasive and expensive procedures and oral surgery.
- Delay in detecting and diagnosing oral cancer can lead to catastrophic consequences including serious oral surgery and other cancer treatments and even death.
- Undiagnosed and untreated periodontal (gum) disease has been associated with a number of systemic health conditions, including heart disease, diabetes, stroke and pregnancy complications.

Dentists in Virginia understand the gravity of the situation related to the coronavirus pandemic and we are doing our part. We continue to treat emergencies in order to keep patients out of hospital emergency rooms. We have donated scarce PPE to ensure our health care colleagues on the front lines are protected when treating COVID-19 patients.

The ADA has recommended postponing non-emergency procedures until the end of April and has issued detailed interim guidance on how to minimize the risk of transmission in a dental office setting which our members adhere to. We urge you to allow patients to have access to oral healthcare treatment as soon as it can be safely provided according to further guidance from the ADA and CDC. These guidelines, combined with the proper use of social distancing, universal infection control precautions, and appropriate use and stewardship of PPE will allow us to safely and effectively treat our patients, easing the mounting public health cost of deferred treatment for dental disease.

We greatly appreciate your attention to this important matter as we work together to protect the health of all Virginians.

Respectfully,

Dr. Elizabeth Reynolds  
President  
Virginia Dental Association

Ryan Dunn  
Executive Director  
Virginia Dental Association