

New Innovations in Dental Licensure Examinations: Patient Centered CIF

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In 2016, the Commission on Dental Competency Assessments (CDCA) — formerly the North East Regional Board of Dental Examiners (NERB) — will administer a new dental licensing exam format in Florida. This new model, the Patient Centered Curriculum Integrated Format — also known as the “Buffalo Model” — modifies the traditional Curriculum Integrated Format (CIF) exam to provide additional focus on patient care while still meeting the American Board of Dental Examiners’ (ADEX) standards and criterion.

This new exam format marks the next step in a 10-year successful relationship between the CDCA and Florida. The CDCA first partnered with Florida in March 2005 when (then) NERB contracted with the Florida Department of Health to administer the Florida-developed dental licensing examination. In 2008, a jointly developed Florida/NERB format was used until Florida joined the ADEX in October 2011, when the nationally recognized ADEX licensing examination was adopted. Florida became a full member of the CDCA in January 2014. Now, Florida will be one of the first states with licensure candidates participating in the Patient Centered CIF examination at the Fort Lauderdale-based Nova Southeastern University exam on Feb. 19, 2016.

A History of Innovation

The CDCA has been at the center of dental testing innovations since its founding in 1969. The CDCA offered the first regional dental licensing examination, allowing dentists to take one examination and be eligible for licensure in all of its regional member states. In 2008, it introduced the CIF, which integrates the dental licensing process into the final year of dental education, and allows candidates to be eligible for licensure by graduation with time to remediate should they need to retake any portion of the examination. Then in 2015, after two years of discussions between the CDCA, ADEX and the New York State Dental Association (NYSDA), the Patient Centered CIF was introduced as part of a successful and collaborative pilot effort at the University at Buffalo.

The University at Buffalo Pilot Exams

This new exam format included the same content, scoring and criteria as all other ADEX examinations. However, the CDCA’s “Buffalo Model” pilot exams had several key exam administration modifications. First, the CDCA collaborated with the University at Buffalo (UB) School of Dental Medicine’s faculty, allowing them to identify and pre-approve correct and appropriate patient lesions prior to the exams. Second, on exam days all treatment occurred on patients of record as part of an appropriately sequenced treatment plan. Therefore, candidates did not have to search for patients for their exams. Also, if the candidate treatment was incomplete, all patients received treatment to completion after the exam and under faculty supervision. Third, the new Patient Centered CIF “Buffalo Model” was offered five times at UB between January and May 2015. Having multiple exam dates (compared to the normal one to two annual CIF examinations) prevented delay of appropriate and timely treatment on patients, and gave candidates who did not initially pass the examination the ability to take the exam at a later date at this same site for a retake fee. Also, candidates with no-show patients had additional opportunities to take the exam without an additional cost. Finally, the exam was integrated into a normal clinic day so there was minimal disruption to the candidates’ academic schedule. As explained by Drs. Paul Leary and Joel Friedman of the NYSDA after observing the pilot exam at UB in April, “If you didn’t know an exam was happening, you’d think that this was just a regular day in a dental school clinic.”

Student Feedback

The American Student Dental Association (ASDA) offered feedback on the candidate experience during the CDCA’s Buffalo Model pilot exam in their September 2015 *ASDA News*.

Curriculum Integrated Format vs. Buffalo Pilot — ASDA Comparison Table

	Previous ADEX	University of Buffalo Pilot
Times given per year	1–2	5
Patients are approved	Day of Exam	Prior to exam date
Content, scoring and criteria	No difference	No difference
Definitive follow-up care	Referral for treatment	Provided the day of
Clinic status	Shut down	Simultaneously open
Simultaneous competency	No	Yes
Number of examiners	3	3

Author, Dr. Kristopher Mendoza (2015) reported, “A small group of people who took the exam said this exam was much better than the previous model. Students ideally treated patients in an appropriately sequenced treatment plan. The five exam dates mitigated the bottleneck usually created when students search for the same perfect lesion at the same time ... Many of the students finished the exam in two to three sessions, helping to mitigate the increased pressure of a high-stakes, single exam,” (p. 8). The association also published a comparison table between ADEX’s CIF exam (also offered by the CDCA) and the UB pilot examinations (see above). The table highlights improvements in exam administration while noting that ADEX regulations and guidelines were maintained.

A Future for Dental Licensure

Overall, the new CDCA administered Patient Centered CIF model provides a

practical solution to the dental community’s concerns regarding patient involvement in dental licensure examinations. In addition to having more exam dates per school to prevent delay of appropriate and timely treatment on patients, the new format also guarantees treatment to completion and minimizes the search process between candidates and patients by using patients of record at the candidates’ school. As described by UB Assistant Dean Joseph Gambacorta, “This model is the curriculum integrated format in action. It enables the focus of the exam to shift from the candidate to the patient.”

These benefits and administrative modifications will be applied at Nova Southeastern University (and six other U.S. dental schools) for their 2016 graduating class, with several more dental schools expected to adopt this new model in 2017.

The CDCA also offers schools participating in the new Patient Centered CIF the option to include simultaneous competencies with the exam and flexibility in the frequency and timing of exam dates. Moving forward, the CDCA will continue to provide innovations for the dental licensure process in Florida as well as its other 24 member jurisdictions. These advances help the CDCA further its mission to provide excellence, integrity and fairness in candidate testing. For more information on the CDCA and our latest news, we encourage you to visit our website at www.cdcaexams.org.

References

Gambacorta, Joesph. “The Buffalo Model” (presentation, AADB Business Session, Washington, DC, November 3, 2015).
 Mendoza, K. (2015, September). ADEX pilots new licensure exam at Buffalo. *ASDA News*, 45(7), 8.