

## **Dentists: Dislike rural health aides? Why not fly to the Bush to help?**

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So, Dr. Robert Brandjord believes Alaska Natives are being put at risk "unfairly" ("Groups sue to stop rural dental aides," Feb. 1). How about the number of cavities children suffer each year in rural Alaska? Is the good doctor willing to spend \$1,030 to fly to my community and do away with the problem? To complain about the program is one thing, but to file suit? Let's not get carried away. According to previous related articles on the subject, the program is a success in 40 countries, and the dental therapists have all been trained at the same facility for nearly a century.

Also, according to previous related articles, the rural residents are satisfied with the results of the dental aides' work. I assume that if a poll were taken today in rural Alaska, the majority of residents would vote in favor of the program. This would reflect not only on the training facility, but on the aides' ability also. If the aides are unsure of a procedure, I'm sure they would refer the patient to the dentist they work under.

It is the same with community health aides/practitioners; should I not suture, or give immunizations, or not help deliver a baby when needed?

If the American Dental Association and Brandjord want to spend money traveling to rural Alaska and save every tooth, they are more than welcome. Otherwise, let it be.

---- Eddie C. Slaton

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