

# The American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine Begins Offering Qualified Dentist Designation

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The American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine (AADSM) has now begun offering the Qualified Dentist designation, which was announced in 2016, to help dentists promote their knowledge of dental sleep medicine. This new entry-level designation will help demonstrate the beginning of clinical competency to the payers, sleep physicians and patients who are increasingly looking for evidence of expertise.

The AADSM Qualified Dentist designation is an attainable form of recognition that will help dentists who provide oral appliance therapy grow and thrive early in their dental sleep medicine careers. These dentists will hold the designation while they are on the path to American Board of Dental Sleep Medicine (ABDSM) board certification or AADSM Dental Sleep Medicine Facility Accreditation, both of which continue to stand apart as the highest recognitions in our field.

## An Evolving Landscape

The increasingly competitive and frequently changing health care landscape has created the need to define basic competency in oral appliance therapy. Sleep physicians are asking for criteria that proves an individual dentist is skilled in practicing dental sleep medicine. Additionally, patients want coverage for oral appliances from their medical insurance, and insurance companies are looking for appropriate criteria to include in their coverage policies.

Insurance companies often lack the time, expertise and resources to determine competency and, therefore, rely on industry protocols and credentials to set reimbursement policies. ABDSM Diplomate status and AADSM Facility Accreditation are two great options for showcasing proficiency in oral appliance therapy, but both take time and resources to complete. The growing demand for oral appliance therapy in the marketplace means that we need to offer the Qualified Dentist designation in order to provide a baseline qualification for our field.

## Defining the Qualified Dentist Designation

The best practices that define the Qualified Dentist designation are supported by the joint American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) and AADSM Clinical Practice Guideline for the Treatment of Obstructive Sleep Apnea and Snoring with Oral Appliance Therapy.<sup>1</sup> This guideline refers to a “qualified dentist” as the dental provider of choice to provide oral appliance therapy, and makes the case for needing the definition:

The need to append the word “qualified” stems from two things: (1) all of the studies conducted to evaluate the efficacy and risks of oral appliances were conducted by dentists with considerable

experience in dental sleep medicine, and (2) the unfortunate fact that training in dental sleep medicine is uncommon. Therefore, not all dentists have the training or experience required to deliver knowledgeable care, and application of the literature to practice dental sleep medicine.

Educational training in dental sleep medicine during dental school is rare, and not all dentists can claim de facto competence in oral appliance therapy. The successful delivery of oral appliances requires technical skill, acquired knowledge and judgment regarding outcomes and risks of the therapy that can only be acquired through adequate continuing education. The Qualified Dentist designation is attainable and positions both the individual dentist and the entire field of dental sleep medicine for growth. It must be stated very clearly that the difference between the Qualified Dentist designation and ABDSM Diplomate certification is significant. The Qualified Dentist designation refers to the very beginning of competency while Diplomate status demonstrates a high level of competency through more education and experience.

## How to Earn the Qualified Dentist Designation

The AADSM Qualified Dentist designation is intended only for those who need proof of basic competency to show to patients, sleep physicians and payers, and it is meant to be a stepping stone that provides interim recognition for those who are in the process of accumulating the experience, education and cases needed to earn board certification in dental sleep medicine. Therefore, the designation can be held for two years from the date the application is approved by the AADSM, without the option to reapply. If, however, a dentist submits an application to either sit for the ABDSM certification exam or accredit their dental sleep medicine facility through the AADSM, they will be given an opportunity to reapply for the Qualified Dentist designation for an additional two-year period.

To earn the Qualified Dentist designation, a dentist needs:

- A valid state dental license;
- Proof of liability coverage; and
- At least 25 hours of recognized continuing education in dental sleep medicine (e.g., American Dental Association Continuing Education Recognition Program [ADA CERP] or Academy of General Dentistry Program Approval for Continuing Education [AGD PACE]) provided by a dental sleep medicine focused non-profit organization or accredited dental school in the last two years from the date of the application.

AADSM educational offerings—including courses, webinars, online learning modules and more—make it easy for dentists to attain Qualified Dentist status. The AADSM Annual Meeting, which will be held June 2–4, 2017, in Boston, also offers dentists the premier opportunity to acquire CE hours in dental sleep medicine. Upon completion of CE hours, dentists can use the step-by-step instructions on the AADSM website to submit proof of credits, dental license and liability coverage. For AADSM members, the Qualified Dentist application is a free member benefit.

### Benefits for Qualified Dentists

The AADSM Qualified Dentist designation is a proactive solution developed to help dentists entering the field provide proof of skill and continue getting referrals and insurance payments even as the landscape continues to change.

To help patients find the most qualified sleep dentists, the “Find a Dentist” locator on the AADSM website will transition in 2018 to display only those members who have earned one of the three AADSM-recognized credentials—the Qualified Dentist designation, ABDSM Diplomate certification and/or AADSM Dental Sleep Medicine Facility Accreditation. These prioritized listings will help the AADSM demonstrate our support of the expertise that dental sleep medicine designations bring to the table.

With significant growth in dental sleep medicine comes increased scrutiny and competition—and it is our role, as the leading association in the field, to protect the reputation of oral appliance therapy that we have worked so hard to create—that of a proven, effective treatment solution for sleep-disordered breathing. It is in all of our best interest to support dentists

who demonstrate a high level of competency through education, experience and the successful completion of a rigorous board certification exam and to nurture a dental sleep medicine profession that values best practices and successful patient outcomes above all else.

### CITATION

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### REFERENCES

1. Ramar K, Dort LC, Katz SG, et al. Clinical practice guideline for the treatment of obstructive sleep apnea and snoring with oral appliance therapy: an update for 2015. *J Clin Sleep Med*. 2015;11(7):773–827.

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Dr. Smith has indicated no financial conflicts of interest.