

Story Regarding “The Tooth Fairy” in the Tulsa World

The Board of Dentistry received a complaint late last week about an individual that was routinely pulling teeth of children in a school setting and alleging that the person was illegally practicing dentistry. Despite the information as presented in the story, THERE HAS BEEN NO ACTION TAKEN ON THIS MATTER BY THE BOARD IN ANY WAY AND NO INVESTIGATION HAS OCCURRED.

The process as with all complaints is that the Board President is made aware of the complaints and assigns an investigative review panel that is comprised of two Board Members and the President. The panel will review the matter and determine the manner in which the complaint will proceed. The Board’s investigators have not contacted the person portrayed in the story or started an investigation of this matter as it was made to sound in the report.

The questions posed by the reporter were hypothetical questions as are received by the Board office on a daily basis. “If someone is routinely pulling teeth in a non-dental office setting and they do not have a dentistry license is that illegal?” The answer is probably yes. Title 59 O.S. 328.19 (5) of the Oklahoma State Statutes defines specific acts considered practicing dentistry which includes “removing human teeth”. There are many other factors to review and consider before making any type of determination. One of those considerations is whether or not the person is allowed to provide any type of medical treatment to the child or “patient”. The Board is faced with many situations and allegations of “fake”, “underground” and unlicensed individuals practicing dentistry out of their garage and advertising on social websites on a regular basis. The story in the Tulsa World regarding the “tooth fairy” is not the typical type of unlicensed complaint that we see, however we do not know the factors surrounding it as the Board review panel has not had time to look at it as the complaint was just received.

The Board’s duty is to protect the public and ensure to the best of their ability, that safe dental treatment is provided to the public. However, the Board has many different options concerning the handling of any complaint or matter including but not limited to, taking no action, asking the individual to voluntarily cease and desist, seeking an injunction and in some cases presenting cases to other entities to potentially take other actions.

“I was made aware of this complaint last Thursday. It is the duty of the Board to review every complaint it receives and determine what if any action should be taken. The Board does not have the luxury of determining what cases they want to review and investigate as the Board has to look at every case brought to them. We have had a number of “fake” dentist cases that have caused harm to the public in the past. “

Dr. James A. Sparks, President, State of Oklahoma Board of Dentistry.