Access to Dental Care of Patients with Special Needs in North Carolina
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ABSTRACT
Patients with special needs often face unique challenges in accessing quality healthcare, including dental care. In North Carolina, there is evidence of significant regional disparities in the availability and access to special needs dentistry resources. This poster aims to explore these disparities and identify potential contributing factors. Examining data on the distribution of disabled populations and special needs dentistry resources across the state, we aim to explore the current landscape of special needs dentistry in North Carolina and highlight areas in need of improvement. By addressing these issues, we hope to ensure that all individuals in North Carolina, regardless of their location or disability status, have access to the dental care they need to maintain good oral health. To improve current health care needs, East Carolina University School of Dental Medicine has established Community Learning Centers where dental office is scarce. However, Dental Care for the Special Needs seems necessary to provide various needs.

LITERATURE
Barriers to Dental Care of Patients with Special Needs Julie J. Williams ²

- Finding a Dentist Willing to Treat
- Transportation Distance
- Finances
- Wait Time

A Review of the Oral Health of Individuals with Disabilities in Puerto Rico and among U.S. Hispanics Barry Waldman et al ³

There are many types of disabilities, and each type has behavioral limitations. For the people with disabilities to have medical problems. Also this can affect oral health status and disease morbidity depending on the type of disability.

The Effect of Oral Health Awareness of Guardians of Persons with Mental Retardation on Dental Clinic Visit Young Soo Kim ⁴

Access to dental care for people with disabilities is difficult because of various obstacles, such as scarce resources, poor welfare and financial policies, and not enough dental care providers for the special needs. Dental care service system for the special needs is not established well, therefore they do not receive care in a timely manner.

Dental Fear and Anxiety as a Barrier to Accessing Oral Health Care Among Patients with Special Health Care Needs Sharon M Gordon ⁵

For people with special health care needs, the channels for obtaining information to access dental care services are limited. There is a lack of communication between people with disabilities and health care providers. Also, the supply for dental care service is not enough to fulfill the demand. In general, the existing health care system for vulnerable groups such as the disabled is too down, taking the form of provider-centered, one-way supply.

METHODS
Peer reviewed articles and census data from government were analyzed and qualitative thematic analysis was used to determine perspective towards access to dental care of patients with special needs. Examining data on the distribution of disabled populations and special needs dentistry resources across the state, we investigated on the current landscape of special needs dentistry in North Carolina.

RESULTS

Figure 2 Meaningful Adult Medicaid Dental Office Locations, 2018

Figure 3 Supply and Demand for Medicaid Dental Services for Adults by Census Tract, 2018

Table 1 Distribution of Adult Dental Providers by Regions with Different Levels of Demand and Supply for Medicaid Dental Services, 2018

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Dental Care Facilities</th>
<th>Medicaid Enrollees</th>
<th>Medicaid Dental Access</th>
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DISCUSSION
Access to dental care of patients with special health care needs was examined. Disabled population in North Carolina is about 13.5%. Most of them are Medicaid enrollees. Among Medicaid-enrolled adults in North Carolina, dental care utilization is 18.7%, below the national average for publicly insured adults (23.2% percentile). Utilization among Medicaid-enrolled adults is especially low in the mountain west portion of the state and along the Atlantic coast in northeastern North Carolina. Meaningful Medicaid dental providers tend to be clustered around major metropolitan areas. Low Medicaid dental care utilization seems to be associated with low supply of meaningful Medicaid providers. There are important policy implications to consider. There are several areas in North Carolina where there appears to be a sufficient number of Medicaid providers, yet dental care utilization is lower than the state average. In such areas, it may be that there is a lack of knowledge among Medicaid enrollees about how to contact dentists that participate in the program. Additional patient outreach in these areas may be necessary to inform enrollees of the locations of meaningful providers or, more broadly, to raise oral health literacy. To fulfill the health care needs of people with special needs and adequately provide dental health care for them, establishing dental hospital for the special needs seems important. The hospital should be located where Medicaid provider is scarce. The hospital should have ambulatory anesthesia settings as well as outpatient treatment operators. The medical workforce should include not only dentists but anesthesiologists as well. Further studies required to establish Dental Hospital for the Special Needs in North Carolina.

REFERENCES
1. An ADA Health Policy Institute Analysis for the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Health Benefits