

# SOUTH CAROLINA DENTAL ASSOCIATION

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Tuesday, December 13, 2011  
The Honorable G.M. Smith  
Chairman - House Ways and Means Healthcare Subcommittee  
420 Blatt Building  
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Representative Smith:

The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) notified dentists that the Medicaid adult dental emergency program would be discontinued February 1, 2011. The SCDA believed this decision was shortsighted since it would shift costs for adult dental Medicaid recipients to a more expensive delivery system without the emergency being completely resolved.

The SCDA firmly believed that by eliminating the adult program, it could have caused adverse affects on pregnant moms. If a pregnant mom cannot access dental care, dental disease could lead to complications during pregnancy. Mounting evidence shows that periodontal (gum) disease, when left untreated during pregnancy, can lead to low birth weight babies and premature births. This would only lead to additional costs during infant care in a hospital.

The SCDA produced an Apples to Apples comparison after the decision to cut the Medicaid adult dental emergency program was announced.

## Emergency Adult Dental Medicaid Program

Patient with abscessed tooth seeks treatment in a dental office.

Problem Focused Exam:	\$38.34
X-Ray	\$13.65
Extraction of Tooth	\$55.24

**Total Cost to Medicaid: \$107.23**

Result:

**1-Problem is solved.**

**2-No further treatment necessary.**

Source: SCDHHS Fee Schedule

## No Emergency Adult Dental Medicaid Program

Patient with abscessed tooth seeks treatment in the emergency room.

Hospital ER Charge	\$76
X-Ray	\$102
Physician Fee	\$33
Radiologists Fee	\$25

**Total Cost to Medicaid: \$236**

Result:

1-Pain and infection medication are prescribed to treat symptoms.

**2-Problem is NOT SOLVED and will likely reoccur.**

3-Could result in return visits to ER.

Source: Palmetto Health, Columbia, SC

Since the cuts have been eliminated for almost one year, a recent report by the University of South Carolina Research Center found that dental issues were the number one visit to emergency rooms for ambulatory care sensitive conditions in all but one rural county of South Carolina.

Recently, the SCDA learned that SCDHHS has placed in their 2013 fiscal budget money to potentially add back some services for the adult dental emergency program. The SCDA fully supports the agency in its requests and urges all legislators to support this.

Sincerely,

Dr. Edward M. Wise, Sr.  
SCDA President