



DENTAL THERAPIST SPOTLIGHT

BRIEANNE BORNTRAGER

Passion for Reaching the Underserved Leads to Increased Access to Oral Health Care, Job Creation and Cost-Effective Care for a Rural Community

Brienne Bortrager knew from an early age that she wanted to pursue a career in oral health. At the University of Wisconsin, she was on a pre-dental track when she received an invitation to apply for the first class of a new dental therapy program at the University of Minnesota.

As an undergrad, Brie completed three impactful dental mission trips to Central America, working alongside pre-dental, pre-med and pre-vet students and providing much needed dental care for Tribal populations in the region. With her developing passion for treating underserved populations top of mind, Brie applied to both the dental school and dental therapy programs.

In 2009, Brie was waitlisted for dental school at the same time she was accepted into the first dental therapy class in the state. She knew she had a difficult decision to make, but ultimately, dental therapy best fit Brie's desire to work with the underserved – a passion that she believes would have been challenging to pursue with the significant expense of dental school and the subsequent loans that would have been necessary. Brie was also attracted to the flexibility dental therapy provided as she celebrated the birth of her first child while completing her dental therapy degree.

Dental therapy was the right decision for Brie and for her community.

Early in her career as a dental therapist, Brie served as part of two Federally Qualified Health Centers and as part of a large group practice comprised of patients mostly on state insurance.



Today, Brie is an integral part of Forever Smiles – Arlington, a satellite clinic of Forever Smiles – Glencoe, in a small farming community located an hour west of Minneapolis. Dr. Shawn Knorr had a desire to meet the needs of underserved patients for the rural community while also continuing to perform more complex dentistry work such as implants, full mouth rehabilitation, etc. To fulfill both missions, he expanded the dental team by bringing Brie on as a dental therapist and purchased the satellite clinic practice from a retiring dentist.

Production of Practice '17 – '18 (*under previous provider model*):
\$288,000; collections: \$250,000
Production of Practice '18 – '19 (*with dental therapist model*):
\$1,365,000; collections: \$834,000



Initially, Brie was the only main full-time provider at the satellite clinic, and the clinic operated three chairs with a full-time dental hygienist, full-time dental assistant and two full-time front desk staff. The owner dentist and/or an associate dentist served on a rotating schedule to provide off-site supervision and to perform any procedures outside of the dental therapy scope.

Open four days a week, the satellite clinic immediately began serving additional patients who had previously struggled to receive access to care. **Working in collaboration with the dentist, Brie has been able to meet the needs of the community and provide much needed pediatric and restorative care to the rural farming community in which she serves.**

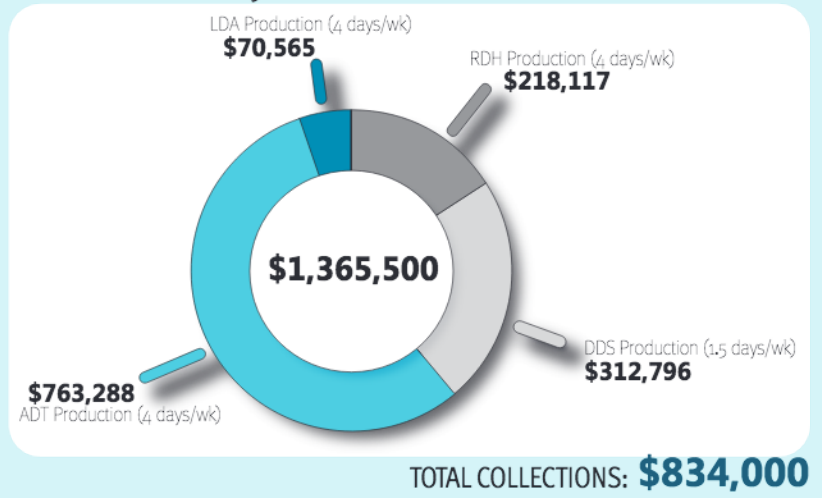
In addition to providing increased access to care, financially the model has been economically advantageous for the practice as well. From 2018 – 2019, the overhead was approximately \$42,000/month with profits of \$27,000/month.

In just two years, due to demand and effectiveness, Brie and her colleagues were able to expand from three chairs to five chairs and effectively double their team and capacity by adding another full-time dentist as well as an additional full-time dental hygienist and support staff.

The dental therapy model has been critical to the success of their clinic. The model worked initially because Brie was able to work under general supervision. As a result, in working together, the team was able to grow the patient base until there were enough financial resources generated to bring on additional staff.

PRODUCTION OF PRACTICE

March 2018 - March 2019



TOTAL PATIENTS:

21% UNINSURED

31% COMMERCIAL INSURANCE

48% MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

2,763

Even further, Forever Smiles – Arlington is the only practice accepting state insurance in the two counties in which they are located.

Dental therapy has brought job creation, increased access and cost-effective care to the rural community in which the clinic is located and, Brie's passion for meeting the needs of the underserved is realized day in and day out.