Statement on the use of lasers by licensed dental professionals (1-27-03)

Preface:

Dentistry continues to evolve, as do all modern medical fields. With that evolution new technologies appear. Lasers have been in dentistry since their first introduction in 1990. Now that literally thousands of dentists-around the world utilize laser technology, several questions have been raised about their appropriate use. This presents a challenge to those who regulate the practice of dentistry. These regulatory agencies, charged with protecting the safety of dental consumers, might be considering how to deal with a new technology that was not even conceived of when most dental practice acts were written.

The Academy of Laser Dentistry has been a leading organization in this rapidly developing field since its inception. Academy members are the leaders in laser research, training, education, testing and manufacturing. Many of our members are involved with organized dentistry in their home countries The Academy is a primary source of information, training and certification for laser users and those with any interest in the use of lasers in dentistry.

The Academy does not endorse any restrictions placed on the use of lasers that do not equally apply to other devices and equipment, and therefore makes the following recommendations to the appropriate regulatory agencies or boards regarding laser use:

1. Use of Lasers by Dentists, Dental Hygienists and Dental Assistants - When addressing the issue of which laser procedures should be allowed by providers of dental services, consider first the scope of practice as currently defined in the dental practice act. For example, if a board seeks to determine whether subgingival curettage, the curing of composites or bleaching of teeth may be performed with a laser by a dental hygienist or dental assistant, one must determine if the dental practice act in your particular state/country allows them to perform those procedures at all.

- If such procedures are outside of the scope of practice for dental hygienists and/or dental assistants, then they are not permitted by law, irrespective of any device - laser or not.
- If such procedures are permitted under the existing dental practice act, one must determine if there is any mention of specific instruments to be used to perform those procedures. If not, the provider of dental services (dentist, hygienist or dental assistant) should be able to choose any device suitable to perform that procedure, laser or otherwise - if that device is safe and effective, and if the use of that device is consistent with the provider's education, training and experience.

2. Dental Laser Education and Training - The Academy of Laser Dentistry believes all providers of dental laser services (dentists, hygienists, dental assistants) should be properly trained in the use of lasers and recommends that laser practitioners complete, at minimum, a Standard Proficiency level of competency as described in the *Curriculum Guidelines and Standards for Dental Laser Education.* If a board chooses to implement a prerequisite for laser use, the Academy recommends that Standard Proficiency be used as the educational standard.

Statement:

- The Academy of Laser Dentistry (ALD) supports the use of lasers in dentistry when used by a properly trained and licensed dental professional where the procedure is safe, effective, consistent with his/her education and experience, and within the scope of his/her license.

- The ALD supports all international agencies in their duty of insuring the safety and effectiveness of any laser instrument. These agencies regulate the companies that produce and/or sell these instruments so that they adhere to sound manufacturing principles and truthful marketing claims.

- The ALD supports the laws of individual nations that regulate claims made by manufacturers for specific indications for use. The laser devices sold and/or manufactured in various countries may have different operator's manuals describing techniques of safety and effectiveness on dental tissues.