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|  | Title: Position Statement 10: Scope of Practice | |
| | Date Reviewed: November 2021 | Version PS10.21.0 |
| | Approved by: ADOHTA Ltd. Board of Directors | Next Review: November 2022 |

SCOPE OF PRACTICE

Advice for ADOHTA members

PREAMBLE

Purpose

This advice has been developed to provide a framework for the [updated Scope of Practice](#) and Independent Practice for Oral Health Therapists, Dental Hygienists, Dental Therapists as described by the [Dental Board of Australia's Scope of Practice Guidelines](#).

INTRODUCTION

Oral Health Therapists, Dental Hygienists and Dental Therapists are members of the dental team. They are educated in and practise a range of the activities included in the definition of dentistry.

The members of the dental team work together within their particular areas of competence, to provide the best possible care for their patients.

The [Dental Board of Australia](#) (2020) states, *"All dental practitioners are members of the healthcare team and are expected to work with each other to provide the best possible care and outcome for their patients. An individual dental practitioner's scope of practice depends on their education, qualifications, training, experience and competence. Dental practitioners are expected to know their scope of practice."*

Each team member of the dental team is treated as an individual practitioner, able to exercise autonomy in their decisions within their scope of practice. You are solely responsible for the treatments, decisions and advice you provide, regardless of your practitioner registration division.

Structured Professional Relationship

The requirement for a Structured Professional Relationship is no longer a requirement for Dental Hygienists, Dental Therapists and Oral Health Therapists.

REQUIREMENTS

1. All dental practitioners are members of the healthcare team. They are expected to work with other members of the healthcare team to provide the best possible care and outcome for their patients.
2. Dental practitioners must only perform dental treatment:
 - a. for which they have been educated and trained, and
 - b. in which they are competent.
3. A dental practitioner must not direct any person whether a registered dental practitioner or not to undertake dental treatment or give advice outside that person's education or competence.

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4. All dental practitioners are expected to practise within the definition of dentistry and their dental practitioner division. (Dental Board of Australia 2020)

Scope of Practice

All dental practitioners are able to '*broaden their knowledge, expertise and competence by completing continuing professional development (CPD).*' (Dental Board of Australia 2020). This aspect of the guidelines reflects the Dental Board of Australia's stance to no longer provide accreditation for extension of scope programs.

It is important to consider the factors that determine the breadth or limit of your practice can include:

- level of education and training
- competence and experience (including recency of practice)
- registration or legal requirements
- clinical need
- professional indemnity
- workplace environment, needs and capacity

(Dental Board of Australia 2020)

The professional Scope of Practice for Dental Therapists, Dental Hygienist or Oral Health Therapists is described within the Australian Dental Council's '[Professional Competencies of the Newly Qualified Dental Hygienist, Dental Therapist and Oral Health Therapist](#)' (Australian Dental Council 2020). Within the profession's scope of practice lies the Individual Scope of Practice for each practitioner. This will differ significantly from person to person dependent upon their formal education, additional skills development through courses/CPD, years of experience and competency.

Your individual scope of practice depends not only on your division, but also on your education, training and competence. It may vary from other practitioners in the same division and may be more limited than the division's overall scope. For example, you will be unable to perform some treatments if you have not done relevant training. You must only perform dental treatments that you have been educated and trained in, and that you are competent in. You are responsible for knowing your own scope of practice, so you must learn to assess your expertise.

Continuing professional development (CPD) can allow a practitioner to:

- maintain and improve their skills and experience
- broaden their individual scope of practice within their division.

CPD does not allow a practitioner to move from one division to another. Dental hygienists, dental prosthetists, dental therapists and oral health therapists cannot become dentists simply by completing CPD courses.

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Registered Dental Hygienists, Oral Health Therapists and Dental Therapists must be cognisant of their Individual Scope of Practice and competence and must not practice outside these.

Code of Conduct

The board clearly stipulates the mandatory requirements for dental practitioners to abide by their professional obligations as specified within the Code of Conduct. These are:

- Practitioners must work within their scope of practice
- Practitioners should foster good relationships with colleagues and must delegate, refer or hand over care as needed.
- Practitioners are solely responsible for:
 - Determining their own scope of practice based on their education, training and competence
 - Working within this scope.

Dental practitioner divisions:

| Division | Scope of practice |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <i>Dental hygienists</i> | <p><u>Focus:</u> oral health.</p> <p><u>Services:</u> assessment, diagnosis, treatment, management, education to prevent oral disease, promotion of healthy oral behaviours.</p> <p><u>May include:</u> periodontal or gum treatment, preventive services, other oral care. Patients: all ages.</p> |
| <i>Dental therapists</i> | <p><u>Focus:</u> oral health.</p> <p><u>Services:</u> assessment, diagnosis, treatment, management, prevention.</p> <p><u>May include:</u> restorative treatment, fillings, tooth removal, promotion of oral health, other oral care. Patients: mainly children and adolescents, but some adults.</p> |
| <i>Oral health therapists</i> | <p><u>Focus:</u> oral health, with qualifications in dental therapy and dental hygiene.</p> <p><u>Services:</u> assessment, diagnosis, treatment, management, prevention.</p> <p><u>May include:</u> restorative treatment, fillings, tooth removal, periodontal treatment, other</p> |

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| | oral care to promote healthy oral behaviours. Patients: all ages. |
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Self-Reflective Tool

Located on the Dental Board of Australia's website is a [reflective practice tool](#) for practitioners to utilise to determine their individual scope of practice.

References:

Australian Dental Council 2020, *Professional Competencies of the Newly Qualified Dental Hygienist, Dental Therapist and Oral Health Therapist*, Australian Dental Council, viewed 12th October 2020, <https://www.adc.org.au/sites/default/files/Media_Libraries/PDF/Accreditation/Professional%20Competencies%20of%20the%20Newly%20Qualified%20Dental%20DH%20DT%20OHT_rebrand%20Final.pdf>.

Dental Board of Australia 2020, *Know your scope*, Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, viewed 29th June 2020, <<https://www.dentalboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines/Know-your-scope.aspx>>.

Dental Board of Australia 2020, *Reflective practice tool*, Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, viewed 29th June 2020, <<https://www.dentalboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines/Know-your-scope/Resources-to-help-you/Reflective-practice-tool.aspx>>.

Dental Board of Australia 2020, *Scope of practice guidelines*, Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, viewed 12th October 2020, <<https://www.dentalboard.gov.au/documents/default.aspx?record=WD19%2f29410&dbid=AP&checksum=9hJa1v56w5rsUfNdz0OVYw%3d%3d>>

Dental Board of Australia 2020, *Scope of practice registration standard*, Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, viewed 12th October 2020, <<https://www.dentalboard.gov.au/documents/default.aspx?record=WD19%2f29300&dbid=AP&checksum=NtfSyyz7Kd49Uq6CtyPCJQ%3d%3d>>.