

CODE OF PRACTICE - DENTAL HYGIENE

PRODUCED BY THE COUNCIL FOR THE PROFESSIONS COMPLEMENTARY TO MEDICINE

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Introduction

The Dental Hygienist should be guided by the Code of Practice in conjunction with the Code of Professional and Ethical Conduct, so as to give an optimal delivery of competent, professional service within the oral health team.

Definition of Dental Hygienist

The Dental Hygienist is a professional oral health educator and clinical operator, who, as an auxiliary to the Dentist uses scientific methods for the control and prevention of oral diseases especially periodontal disease and dental disease. The Dental Hygienist aids individuals in attending and maintaining optimum oral health. The Dental Hygienist is also an essential member of the Dental Health Team in general practices, the Community Dental Services, Hospital Services. The services of the Dental Hygienist are utilised in programmes for research, professional education, public health, industrial and institutional care.

The Registered Dental Hygienist is permitted to deliver dental work under the supervision of a dentist who has examined the patient and has indicated the course of treatment to be provided.

The Dental Hygienist:-

1. A/ can perform Scaling and Polishing of teeth, that is to say the removal of deposits, accretions and stains from the surfaces of the teeth which are exposed or which are beneath the free margins of the gums, including the application of medicaments, solutions, varnishes, gels and fissure sealants appropriate thereto.

B/ can perform subgingival scaling including comprehensive root surface debridement, which may involve infiltration anaesthesia together with placing of antimicrobial agents when necessary.
2. Can monitor periodontal disease by using current indices.
3. Can treat patients under conscious sedation or under general anaesthesia provided a dentist is present throughout the treatment.
4. Can participate in Dental Health Education in the principles and practice of oral hygiene on individual and group basis of all ages inclusive of professional personnel.
5. Can develop a home care plan for individual patients to maintain oral health.

6. Ensure that oral hygiene and dietary advice whether an individual or group basis should be given within the confines of the professional competence and knowledge of the Dental Hygienist concerned.

The Dental Hygienist should:-

1. Comply with current infection control standards and if in doubt, an infection control officer should be consulted.
2. Have respect for patients, and colleagues without prejudice, diversity of background and opportunity, language and culture.
3. Ensure his/her professional responsibilities and standard of practice are not influenced by considerations of age, sexual preference, religion, sex, race, nationality, party politics, social or economic status or nature of a patient's health status.
4. Maintain the recognition of patients rights, particularly with regard to confidentiality and informed consent according to the Health Care Professions Act, 2003 (Cap. 464) and Data Protection Act.
5. Never disclose any information of a personal or confidential nature obtained in the course of practice of his/her profession except to the dental surgeon/s under whose direction or supervision the dental hygienist is working, providing that the patient benefits from this information.
6. Be aware of moral and ethical responsibilities involved in the promotion of care to individual patients and to groups.
7. Recognise the need for effective self management of duties and be able to practice accordingly, without exposing oneself or that of colleagues to health risks according to the Health and Safety Act 424 Cap XXVII of 2000.
8. Be responsible to and held accountable for the quality of work delivered.
9. Be prepared to request additional training support when he/she perceives the need.
10. Have an appreciation of the importance of continual professional development
11. Consult, co-operate and collaborate constructively with professional colleagues regarding professional duties.
12. Seek to maintain and enhance his/her professional competence by updating and improving personal knowledge of and proficiency in the field.
13. Have an understanding of audit and clinical governance.

Conclusion

It is suggested that a review or updating of the Code of Practice is performed as necessary to reflect the local professional standards as well as any other European legislation which may affect the said Code of Practice. If at any time guidelines, codes or policies are considered to impede the safe and effective performance of the Dental Hygienist's duties, a proposal for changes are to be initiated through the Council for the Professions Complementary to Medicine (CPCM).

It is highly recommended that every Dental Hygienist carries out Continuing Professional Development.