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## **SCOPE OF PRACTICE**

**GENERAL DENTAL COUNCIL**

**General  
Dental  
Council**

**Effective from 30 September 2013**

**The scope of your practice is a way of describing what you are trained and competent to do. It describes the areas in which you have the knowledge, skills and experience to practise safely and effectively in the best interests of patients.**

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## Introduction

This guidance sets out the skills and abilities each registrant group should have. It is not a list of tasks that someone can do. Your scope of practice is likely to change over the course of your career, both because of changes in the technology of dentistry, and your further training and development. The guidance also describes additional skills that you might develop after registration to increase your scope of practice. You may expand your scope by developing additional skills, or you may deepen your knowledge of a particular area by choosing more specialised practice.

You should only carry out a task or type of treatment or make decisions about a patient's care if you are sure that you have the necessary skills and are appropriately trained, competent and indemnified. If a task, type of treatment or decision is outside your scope of practice or you do not feel that you are trained and competent to do it you must refer the patient to an appropriately trained colleague. You must practise in accordance with the Council's standards document 'Standards for the Dental Team' at all times.

To carry out the additional skills you will need to undertake further training. For more complex skills, you should undertake training delivered by an approved educational provider and including some form of assessment.

If you want to carry out the "reserved duties" listed, you will need to gain a qualification which will allow you to register in a different registrant group.

### Medical Emergencies

A patient could collapse on any premises at any time, whether they have received treatment or not.

It is therefore essential that ALL registrants are trained in dealing with medical emergencies, including resuscitation, and possess up to date evidence of capability.

## Dental nurses

Dental nurses are registered dental professionals who provide clinical and other support to registrants and patients. As a dental nurse, you can undertake the following if you are trained, competent and indemnified:

- prepare and maintain the clinical environment, including the equipment
- carry out infection prevention and control procedures to prevent physical, chemical and microbiological contamination in the surgery or laboratory
- record dental charting and oral tissue assessment carried out by other registrants
- prepare, mix and handle dental bio-materials
- provide chairside support to the operator during treatment
- keep full, accurate and contemporaneous patient records
- prepare equipment, materials and patients for dental radiography
- process dental radiographs
- monitor, support and reassure patients
- give appropriate patient advice
- support the patient and their colleagues if there is a medical emergency
- make appropriate referrals to other health professionals

**Additional skills** dental nurses could develop include:

- further skills in oral health education and oral health promotion
- assisting in the treatment of patients who are under conscious sedation
- further skills in assisting in the treatment of patients with special needs
- further skills in assisting in the treatment of orthodontic patients
- intra and extra-oral photography
- pouring, casting and trimming study models
- shade taking
- tracing cephalographs

**Additional skills carried out on prescription** from, or under the direction of, another registrant:

- taking radiographs
- placing rubber dam
- measuring and recording plaque indices
- removing sutures after the wound has been checked by a dentist
- constructing occlusal registration rims and special trays
- repairing the acrylic component of removable appliances
- applying topical anaesthetic to the prescription of a dentist
- constructing mouthguards and bleaching trays to the prescription of a dentist
- constructing vacuum formed retainers to the prescription of a dentist
- taking impressions to the prescription of a dentist or a CDT (where appropriate)

Dental nurses can apply fluoride varnish either on prescription from a dentist or direct as part of a structured dental health programme.

Dental nurses **do not** diagnose disease or treatment plan. All other skills are reserved to one or more of the other registrant groups.

## Orthodontic therapists

Orthodontic therapists are registered dental professionals who carry out certain parts of orthodontic treatment under prescription from a dentist.

As an orthodontic therapist, you can undertake the following if you are trained, competent and indemnified:

- clean and prepare tooth surfaces ready for orthodontic treatment
- identify, select, use and maintain appropriate instruments
- insert passive removable orthodontic appliances
- insert removable appliances activated or adjusted by a dentist
- remove fixed appliances, orthodontic adhesives and cement
- identify, select, prepare and place auxiliaries
- take impressions
- pour, cast and trim study models
- make a patient's orthodontic appliance safe in the absence of a dentist
- fit orthodontic headgear
- fit orthodontic facebows which have been adjusted by a dentist
- take occlusal records including orthognathic facebow readings
- take intra and extra-oral photographs
- place brackets and bands
- prepare, insert, adjust and remove archwires previously prescribed or, where necessary, activated by a dentist
- give advice on appliance care and oral health instruction
- fit tooth separators

- fit bonded retainers
- carry out Index of Orthodontic Treatment Need (IOTN) screening either under the direction of a dentist or direct to patients
- make appropriate referrals to other healthcare professionals
- keep full, accurate and contemporaneous patient records
- give appropriate patient advice

**Additional skills** which orthodontic therapists could develop include:

- applying fluoride varnish to the prescription of a dentist
- repairing the acrylic component part of orthodontic appliances
- measuring and recording plaque indices
- removing sutures after the wound has been checked by a dentist

Orthodontic therapists **do not**

- modify prescribed archwires
- give local analgesia
- remove sub-gingival deposits
- re-cement crowns
- place temporary dressings
- diagnose disease
- treatment plan

as these tasks are reserved to dental hygienists, dental therapists or dentists.

Orthodontic therapists **do not** carry out laboratory work other than that listed above as that is reserved to dental technicians and clinical dental technicians.

## Dental hygienists

Dental hygienists are registered dental professionals who help patients maintain their oral health by preventing and treating periodontal disease and promoting good oral health practice. They carry out treatment direct to patients or under prescription from a dentist.

As a dental hygienist, you can undertake the following if you are trained, competent and indemnified:

- provide dental hygiene care to a wide range of patients
- obtain a detailed dental history from patients and evaluate their medical history
- carry out a clinical examination within their competence
- complete periodontal examination and charting and use indices to screen and monitor periodontal disease
- diagnose and treatment plan within their competence
- prescribe radiographs
- take, process and interpret various film views used in general dental practice
- plan the delivery of care for patients
- give appropriate patient advice
- provide preventive oral care to patients and liaise with dentists over the treatment of caries, periodontal disease and tooth wear
- undertake supragingival and subgingival scaling and root surface debridement using manual and powered instruments
- use appropriate anti-microbial therapy to manage plaque related diseases
- adjust restored surfaces in relation to periodontal treatment
- apply topical treatments and fissure sealants
- give patients advice on how to stop smoking
- take intra and extra-oral photographs
- give infiltration and inferior dental block analgesia
- place temporary dressings and re-cement crowns with temporary cement
- place rubber dam
- take impressions
- care of implants and treatment of peri-implant tissues
- identify anatomical features, recognise abnormalities and interpret common pathology
- carry out oral cancer screening
- if necessary, refer patients to other healthcare professionals
- keep full, accurate and contemporaneous patient records
- if working on prescription, vary the detail but not the direction of the prescription according to patient needs

**Additional skills** which dental hygienists might develop include:

- tooth whitening to the prescription of a dentist
- administering inhalation sedation
- removing sutures after the wound has been checked by a dentist

Dental hygienists **do not**:

- restore teeth
- carry out pulp treatments
- adjust unrestored surfaces
- extract teeth

Other skills are reserved to orthodontic therapists, dental technicians, clinical dental technicians or dentists.

## Dental therapists

Dental therapists are registered dental professionals who carry out certain items of dental treatment direct to patients or under prescription from a dentist.

As a dental therapist, you can undertake the following if you are trained, competent and indemnified:

- obtain a detailed dental history from patients and evaluate their medical history
- carry out a clinical examination within their competence
- complete periodontal examination and charting and use indices to screen and monitor periodontal disease
- diagnose and treatment plan within their competence
- prescribe radiographs
- take, process and interpret various film views used in general dental practice
- plan the delivery of care for patients
- give appropriate patient advice
- provide preventive oral care to patients and liaise with dentists over the treatment of caries, periodontal disease and tooth wear
- undertake supragingival and subgingival scaling and root surface debridement using manual and powered instruments
- use appropriate anti-microbial therapy to manage plaque related diseases
- adjust restored surfaces in relation to periodontal treatment
- apply topical treatments and fissure sealants
- give patients advice on how to stop smoking
- take intra and extra-oral photographs
- give infiltration and inferior dental block analgesia
- place temporary dressings and re-cement crowns with temporary cement
- place rubber dam
- take impressions
- care of implants and treatment of peri-implant tissues
- carry out direct restorations on primary and secondary teeth
- carry out pulpotomies on primary teeth
- extract primary teeth
- place pre-formed crowns on primary teeth
- identify anatomical features, recognise abnormalities and interpret common pathology
- carry out oral cancer screening
- if necessary, refer patients to other healthcare professionals
- keep full, accurate and contemporaneous patient records
- if working on prescription, vary the detail but not the direction of the prescription according to patient needs. For example the number of surfaces to be restored or the material to be used.

**Additional skills** which dental therapists could develop include:

- carrying out tooth whitening to the prescription of a dentist
- administering inhalation sedation
- removing sutures after the wound has been checked by a dentist

All other skills are reserved to orthodontic therapists, dental technicians, clinical dental technicians or dentists.



## Dental technicians

Dental technicians are registered dental professionals who make dental devices to a prescription from a dentist or clinical dental technician. They also repair dentures direct to members of the public.

As a dental technician, you can undertake the following if you are trained, competent and indemnified:

- review cases coming into the laboratory to decide how they should be progressed
- work with the dentist or clinical dental technician on treatment planning and outline design
- give appropriate patient advice
- design, plan and make a range of custom-made dental devices according to a prescription
- modify dental devices including dentures, orthodontic appliances, crowns and bridges according to a prescription
- carry out shade taking
- carry out infection prevention and control procedures to prevent physical, chemical and microbiological contamination in the laboratory
- keep full and accurate laboratory records
- verify and take responsibility for the quality and safety of devices leaving a laboratory
- make appropriate referrals to other healthcare professionals

Dental technicians can see patients direct to repair dentures.

**Additional skills** which dental technicians could develop include:

- Working with a dentist in the clinic, assisting with treatment by helping to fit attachments at chairside.
- Working with a dentist or a clinical dental technician in the clinic, assisting with treatment by:
  - taking impressions
  - recording facebows
  - carrying out intra-oral and extra-oral tracing
  - carrying out implant frame assessments
  - recording occlusal registrations
  - tracing cephalographs
  - carrying out intra-oral scanning for CAD/CAM
  - taking intra and extra-oral photographs.

Dental technicians **do not** work independently in the clinic to:

- perform clinical procedures related to providing removable dental appliances
- carry out independent clinical examinations
- identify abnormal oral mucosa and related underlying structures
- fit removable appliances

Dental technicians **do not** provide treatment for or give advice to patients in the ways that are described under the sections for dental hygienists, dental therapists, orthodontic therapists or dentists.

## Clinical dental technicians (CDTs)

Clinical dental technicians are registered dental professionals who provide complete dentures direct to patients and other dental devices on prescription from a dentist. They are also qualified dental technicians.

Patients with natural teeth or implants must see a dentist before the CDT can begin treatment. CDTs refer patients to a dentist if they need a treatment plan or if the CDT is concerned about the patient's oral health.

Clinical dental technology builds on dental technology. As a CDT, you can also undertake the following if you are trained, competent and indemnified:

- prescribe and provide complete dentures direct to patients
- provide and fit other dental devices on prescription from a dentist
- take detailed dental history and relevant medical history
- perform technical and clinical procedures related to providing removable dental appliances
- carry out clinical examinations within their scope of practice
- take and process radiographs and other images related to providing removable dental appliances
- distinguish between normal and abnormal consequences of ageing

- give appropriate patient advice
- recognise abnormal oral mucosa and related underlying structures and refer patients to other healthcare professionals if necessary
- fit removable appliances
- provide sports mouth guards
- keep full, accurate and contemporaneous patient records
- vary the detail but not the direction of a prescription according to patient needs

**Additional skills** which CDTs could develop include:

- oral health education
- re-cementing crowns with temporary cement
- providing anti-snoring devices on prescription of a dentist
- removing sutures after the wound has been checked by a dentist
- prescribing radiographs
- replacing implant abutments for removable dental appliances on prescription from a dentist
- providing tooth whitening treatments on prescription from a dentist

All other skills are reserved to dental hygienists, dental therapists, orthodontic therapists or dentists.

## Dentists

Dentists can carry out all of the treatments listed in this document. As a dentist, you can also undertake the following if you are trained, competent and indemnified:

- diagnose disease
- prepare comprehensive treatment plans
- prescribe and provide endodontic treatment on adult teeth
- prescribe and provide fixed orthodontic treatment
- prescribe and provide fixed and removable prostheses
- carry out oral surgery
- carry out periodontal surgery
- extract permanent teeth
- prescribe and provide crowns and bridges
- provide conscious sedation
- carry out treatment on patients who are under general anaesthesia
- prescribe medicines as part of dental treatment
- prescribe and interpret radiographs

**Additional skills** which a dentist could develop:

- providing implants
- providing non-surgical cosmetic injectables