COUNCIL FOR THE PROFESSIONS COMPLEMENTARY TO MEDICINE

Code of Practice

Dental Hygiene

CPCM MALTA

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Code of Practice – Dental Hygiene

1.0 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.

2.0 Definition

Dental hygienists are registered dental professionals who help clients 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 guidance or prescription from a dentist.

The Dental Hygienist is also an essential member of the Dental Health Team in general practices, the Community Dental Services and Hospital Services.

The services of the Dental Hygienist are utilised in programmes for research, professional education, public health, industrial and institutional care.

A dental hygienist can undertake the following if trained, competent and indemnified:

- Provide oral hygiene care to patients and liaise with dentists over the treatment of caries, periodontal disease and tooth wear;
- Obtain a detailed dental history from patients and evaluate their medical history;
- Carry out a clinical examination within the competence of a dental hygienist;
- Complete periodontal examination and charting and use indices to screen and monitor periodontal disease;
- Diagnose and treatment plan within the competence of a dental hygienist;

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- Only dental hygienists who are officially delegated by their undertaking and/or practitioner and authorised by the Commission for the Protection from Ionising and Non-Ionising Radiation to act in this respect in accordance with Regulation 69 (SL585.01*) may carry out the practical aspects of medical medium Risk Level procedures in dental imaging, limited to bitewing and periapical intraoral dental radiographs referred by a dental surgeon. These images shall only be used for clinical purposes within general dental hygiene practice at the approved facility;
- Plan and provide the delivery of care for patients within the competence of a dental hygienist;
- Undertake supragingival and subgingival scaling and root surface debridement using manual and powered instruments;
- Use appropriate anti-microbial therapy to manage plaque related diseases;
- Apply topical applications of medicaments, solutions, varnishes, gels and fissure sealants;
- Develop a home care plan for individual patients to maintain oral health;
- Give patients advice on smoking cessation;
- Administer local anaesthetic using dento-alveolar infiltration techniques. Only those dental hygienists who have pursued training in the administration of local anaesthesia in an accredited and recognised institution are authorized to perform this procedure;
- Treat patients under conscious sedation or under general anaesthesia provided a dentist is present;
- Care of implants and treatment of peri-implant tissues;
- Carry out oral cancer screening;
- Tooth whitening under the prescription of a dentist;
- Participate in oral health education and promotion; and
- Participate in Dental Public Health Programmes.

The Dental Hygienist should also:

- Comply with current infection control standards and if in doubt, an infection control officer should be consulted;
- Have respect for patients, and colleagues without prejudice, diversity of background and opportunity, language and culture;

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- 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;
- 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;
- Never disclose any information of a personal or confidential nature obtained in the course of practice;
- Be aware of moral and ethical responsibilities involved in the promotion of care to individual patients and to groups;
- 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;
- Be responsible to and held accountable for the quality of work delivered;
- Be prepared to request additional training support when he/she perceives the need;
- Consult, co-operate and collaborate constructively with professional colleagues regarding professional duties;
- Seek to maintain and enhance his/her professional competence by updating and improving personal knowledge of and proficiency in the field; and
- Have an understanding of audit and clinical governance.

3.0 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.

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