

Restricted procedures

Approved by	Council
Date approved	June 2015

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to protect the public from unsafe oral health care, by clarifying which tasks dental assistants may undertake.

Scope

This policy applies to dental assistants.

Policy

1. Certain oral health procedures are restricted by law to registered practitioners.

The Health Practitioners Competence Assurance (Restricted Activities) Order 2005 deems the following oral health procedures to be restricted activities – i.e. restricted to registered health practitioners:

- (a) Surgical or operative procedures below the gingival margin or the surface of the skin, mucous membranes or teeth.
- (b) Clinical procedures involved in the insertion and maintenance of fixed and removable orthodontic or oral and maxillofacial prosthetic appliances.

It is illegal for anyone other than a registered health practitioner to perform these or any other restricted activity, regardless of whether they are working under supervision.

The only exception to this, is if the activity is to be performed in an emergency situation (see References).

Breaches of the above are investigated by the Ministry of Health and may be prosecuted.

2. The Dental Council considers that the following activities to be restricted procedures:

- (a) Scaling involving gingival contact
- (b) Applying bands
- (c) Applying fissure sealants involving etching
- (d) Taking impressions using other than an irreversible hydrocolloid material (alginate)
- (e) Placing and removing separators (other than elastomeric separators)
- (f) Placing brackets and retainers, including etching and bonding of tooth surfaces
- (g) De-bonding/de-banding fixed appliances, including brackets

- (h) Indirect bonding of brackets
- (i) Placing and removing wire ligatures
- (j) Final fitting and/or activation of removable retainers and appliances
- (k) Adjusting removable retainers/appliances

These procedures must not be carried out by dental or orthodontic assistants, even working under supervision.

3. Procedures that can be provided by unregistered assistants aiding registered practitioners

Council recognises that unregistered dental assistants aid registered practitioners in providing a range of clinical services to patients. Council considers this appropriate, provided:

- (a) The unregistered assistant providing clinical services to patients in suitably trained
- (b) The registered practitioner provides onsite clinical direction and monitoring of the assistant in relation to all clinical procedures undertaken by the unregistered assistant
- (c) The registered practitioner is responsible for the patient's clinical care outcomes
- (d) Patients are not given the impression that assistants who undertake some of the procedures contained in the dental auxiliary scopes of practice are doing so in a registered capacity.

If these conditions are met, the procedures that can be carried out by unregistered assistants include:

- (a) Removal of supragingival stains and deposits, providing this does not involve gingival contact or the use of a dental torque handpiece, ultrasonic scaler or air abrasion
- (b) Oral hygiene instruction and advice
- (c) Taking impressions using an irreversible hydrocolloid material (alginate)
- (d) Placing and removing elastomeric separators
- (e) Taking radiographs under the onsite supervision of a dentist holding a licence to use irradiating apparatus for the purpose of dental radiographic diagnosis (and in accordance with NRL guidelines)
- (f) Developing radiographs
- (g) Taking clinical photographs
- (h) Recording medical histories, occlusal relationships
- (i) Placing elastomeric ligatures after the dentist/orthodontist has inserted the archwires
- (j) Removing elastomeric ligatures
- (k) Removing archwires associated with elastomeric ligatures and self ligating brackets
- (l) Engaging self ligating brackets when the archwires are in place

- (m) Tracing cephalometric x-rays
- (n) Trial fitting of removable retainers and appliances
- (o) Making retainers

References

1. Policy on Emergencies.