

Supervision of Allied Dental Personnel

ADOPTED by the FDI General Assembly **November, 2000** in **Paris, France**

REVISED September, 2015 in **Bangkok, Thailand**

March, 2007

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Context

The dentist is responsible to the patient for the diagnosis, advice about treatment options, treatment and prevention of any disease, disorder or dysfunction of the oral-facial complex, in accordance with applicable laws. Consequently, the dentist is the only qualified practitioner to supervise the dental team.

Recently the importance of the role of the allied dental personnel within the dental team has increased, especially in those jurisdictions where the allied dental personnel are allowed to initiate treatment of patients in prescribed circumstances or settings.

In view of this, it is important to clarify the level and type of supervision to be exercised by the dentist, as the leader of the dental team, through adequate knowledge or training that delivers current information designed to:

- increase the valuable participation of the allied dental personnel
- increase and spread and maximize the impact of educational and preventive activities
- reduce the cost of oral health care delivery and increase resources for prevention, diagnosis and treatment
- improve the efficiency of dental teams so that the dentist can concentrate on acts where higher skills and knowledge are necessary
- protect the public

Scope

This policy statement concerns the role of supervision of support staff, which must be conducted in accordance with local regulations while respecting the primary role of the dentist as the leader of the dental team with full responsibility for supervising staff and monitoring functions.

Definitions

Dentist: Leader of the Dental Team with sole responsibility for diagnosis, treatment, organization and management, and the supervision of Allied Dental Personnel, with the aim of providing the highest quality of oral health care to patients.

Allied dental personnel: Member of the dental team, to whom the dentist may delegate certain tasks pertaining to the delivery of oral health care. The functions, duties and roles of the allied dental personnel are regulated in accordance with the current legislation of the country and/or local regulations.

Delegation: Where permitted by law, assignment of specific tasks (under constant supervision and by keeping full responsibility) to another appropriately trained and qualified member of the dental team by the dentist.

Supervision: To oversee, direct or take charge of a person's activities to ensure that tasks are performed properly and safely; supervisory responsibility etc

Monitoring: The observation, supervision or review of duties or functions performed by allied dental personnel under the supervision of a dentist; to keep under observation; to measure or test at intervals, esp. for the purpose of regulation or control.

Referral: The direction of a patient for treatment to a doctor, usually a dentist or dental specialist.

Principles

For patients' safety and optimal care, it is necessary to establish the scope and limits, education, training and tasks suitable for each member of the dental team and to clearly define the relationship and responsibilities role of the dentist as a leader of the team. Thus, it is possible to avoid ethical and legal conflicts within a reference framework that protects the welfare of and provides respect for patients.

Policy

It is the responsibility of the dentist:

- To ensure that all allied dental personnel have the appropriate competence, qualifications, training and skills to perform the tasks delegated to them.
- To monitor and oversee the performance of allied dental personnel with the purpose of ensuring patient safety and the quality of the oral health care delivered to each patient.

It is the responsibility of each member of the dental team:

- To carry out only the delegated tasks, for which they are properly qualified or trained within the authorized practice of the country, or as recognized by local laws and regulations.
- To refer back to the dentist any patient whose condition or required treatment is beyond the individual's competence and training.