

Executive Officer
National Board of Australia
AHPRA
GPO Box 9958
Melbourne 3001

12/6/2013

Re: Scope of practice for Oral Health Therapists and Dental Therapists

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am concerned with the new proposed expanding scope of practice for Oral Health Therapists and Dental Therapists. Therapists are trained to practise basic restorative dentistry on children, and to increase dental awareness in children, promoting prevention of oral diseases. Significantly increasing their scope of practice to work autonomously and practise more difficult procedures not only undermines the complexity of proper comprehensive dental care, but also detracts therapists from where they are most required in the dental field.

The age limitations of patients on their practice exist as comprehensive dental care for adults becomes much more complex. Comprehensive diagnosis and treatment planning requires a greater understanding of dentistry, provided by a dental degree, and cannot be achieved simply with a few short courses. To allow therapists to treat patients of any age, and to have independent diagnosis and treatment planning would greatly undermine proper dental care for the general population, and may indeed create further problems in our general dental health.

Furthermore, by changing therapists' scope or practice, we will decrease the effectiveness of their role in where they are properly trained – promotion of dental care in children, and preventive oral health. These are important roles in the dental field which need to be reinforced, not neglected, with the interest of improving the oral health of our future generations.

Dentistry is complex, and has many fields in which different personnel are trained to practise. To achieve proper dental care on both individual and population levels, dental auxiliaries need to retain their current roles and reinforce dental care on the demographic that they are trained to. Changing the existing Scope of Practice will damage the high standard of dental care in Australia and I would urge that these changes do not take place.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Timothy Chiang

Dentist