From: [redacted]
To: dentalboardconsultation
Subject: Independent hygeinist and therapist
Date: Saturday, 25 May 2013 8:06:26 PM

The executive officer,

I am writing this submission to voice my concerns about hygeints and therapists campaigning for independence to practice.
What comes to mind is, what is the reason or need for this.
I work with a hygienist and I value her expertise in her profession. I think they are an important part of providing dental care. I am sure that with longer experience they feel that they can work on their own.
However, I don't think that is the concern when it comes to looking after the patient. It is not just a matter of looking at gums, looking at pocket depths, bleeding and early caries. It is about delivering a holistic approach and looking at every factor in the patients medical, social and personal life to be able to provide proper diagnosis and treatment.
Will independent hygeinist and therapist make things simpler? I think not. It will complicate matters for patients. As they only have limited expertise, anything beyond that, the patient will have to be referred to a dentist. This gives the patient a longer treatment time and multiple referrals and appointments.
Will having independent hygeinist and therapist make things cheaper? I think not. They will still charge about the same amount. Let's face it, their overheads will still be high; dental chairs, equipment, assistants and lease of buildings are expensive. So again, the patients will suffer.
Patients will still be paying about the same amount and will be paying again if referred to a dentist for other exams and diagnosis.
Do they have the same scope in training as dentists? Obviously not. For this simple premise, they still need to work with dentists to deliver the best treatment to patients.
Confidence versus competence have been tried before. Are they competent in their profession yes. But I think they are being overly confident in thinking that they can practice without the guidance of a dentist.
Again, to treat patients and disease, to give patients the best treatment lies beyond drill and fill and pocket depths and debridement. Independent hygeinist and therapist won't solve problems but add to them.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thea Meneses BDent