



SINGAPORE DENTAL COUNCIL

Unique Entity Number (UEN): T08GB0050C
81 Kim Keat Road, #09-00 NKF Centre, Singapore 328836
☎ 62533185 ✉ enquiries@dentalcouncil.gov.sg
🌐 <http://www.sdc.gov.sg>

SDC Circular No. 2/2019

25 May 2019

Presidents,
Singapore Dental Association
College of General Dental Practitioner
College of Dental Surgeons, Academy of Medicine Singapore

Vice Dean,
Faculty of Dentistry, National University of Singapore

Registered Dentists

BETTER COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT FOR SAFE AND QUALITY DENTAL CARE FOR PATIENTS

The Singapore Dental Council (SDC) and Ministry of Health (MOH) are inviting views and feedback from our dental professional bodies and the dental community on the preliminary recommendations of an MOH-appointed Working Committee on better competency development for safe and quality dental care.

Background

2. The practice of dentistry is evolving with advances in dental science and technology and changes in population profile. Patient expectations on the standard and quality of dental care are also rising. In recent years, the Singapore Dental Association (SDA) has received over 100 annual complaints against dentists, of which some were escalated to the SDC when mediation failed. On its part, the SDC has seen a four-fold increase in initial complaints and more than three-fold increase in statutory complaints, from 10 and 6 in 2014 to 40 and 21 in 2018 respectively.

3. Given the increasing patient expectations and demand on safe and quality dental care, it is important that our dentists acquire and update their knowledge and skills to maintain high standards of competency and professionalism. The safety and quality of the dental care provided to patients must continue to be of utmost priority.

Working Committee

4. In November 2017, MOH appointed a Working Committee to recommend how the training and competencies of dentists can be enhanced to ensure the continued safety and quality of dental care. The Working Committee comprises general dental practitioners and specialists from both the private and public sectors. Representatives from our professional dental bodies, namely SDC, SDA, College of General Dental Practitioners and College of Dental Surgeons, as well as the Faculty of Dentistry, National University of Singapore (FoD, NUS) were on the Working Committee. The terms of reference and composition of the Working Committee are at [Annex A](#).

5. The Working Committee has held a total of eight meetings and had discussions outside of the meetings. It has studied relevant information and taken reference from international benchmarks and overseas guidelines and local training courses. Members of the Committee also considered the perspectives and likely concerns of their members and community.

Working Committee's Preliminary Recommendations

6. The Working Committee has surfaced a number of preliminary recommendations to MOH.

(I) Framework for Competencies

7. The Working Committee has proposed the following draft framework to categorise the competences for dental care.

- a. Competencies for Basic Dental Care – to be attained by dentists who have completed undergraduate dental training (i.e. Bachelor of Dental Surgery, FoD, NUS or equivalent), and with ongoing Continuing Dental Education courses.
- b. Competencies for Intermediate Dental Care Requiring Additional Training – to be attained by dentists registered with the SDC through additional training for selected procedures of higher risk that require skills beyond what is taught under undergraduate dental training but without the need for specialist training.

The number of such procedures is expected to be small, and the list can be reviewed by the SDC on a periodic basis as dental practice evolves. The procedures can continue to be provided at both general dental clinics and specialist dental clinics. Some of these procedures being looked into include implant dentistry and wisdom tooth surgery.

- c. Competencies for Specialist Dental Care – to be attained by dentists through specialist training (i.e. Master of Dental Surgery, FoD, NUS or equivalent).

(II) Certificates of Competency for Identified Higher-Risk Intermediate Dental Care Procedures

8. To help dentists attain the competencies for the identified higher-risk intermediate dental care procedures and provide confidence to dental patients, the Working Committee has proposed the development of new training courses leading to Certificates of Competency (COC) in the identified higher-risk procedures. Suitable existing courses can also award COCs. The accreditation of the courses would be done by the SDC.

9. The Committee has recommended that dentists planning to perform the identified higher-risk intermediate dental care procedures be encouraged to undergo the relevant courses and attain the COCs as part of good clinical practice. However, the COCs need not be mandatory at this time.

(III) Accreditation of COC Courses Under CPE Framework

10. The Working Committee has proposed that the courses leading to the COCs be recognised under the SDC Continuing Professional Education (SDC CPE) framework. This would enable participation in COC courses to count towards dentists' CPE requirements.

(IV) Prospective Application of COCs

11. Newly registered dentists can attain the COCs through the relevant training courses accredited by the SDC.

12. The Working Committee recognised that existing registered dentists may already possess the knowledge and skills for the identified higher-risk intermediate dental care procedures. The Committee has proposed that existing registered dentists who have acquired equivalent competencies through past equivalent training courses, on-the-job training or relevant working experience can apply and be issued with a relevant COC.

Seeking Views and Feedback from Dental Community

13. SDC and MOH would like to thank the Working Committee for its work and preliminary recommendations. MOH and SDC will study the recommendations carefully and discuss them further with the Committee.

14. Together, we will also gather additional views and feedback from the dental community and the public, before making any decision. We will reach out to relevant dental professional bodies and the wider dental community, as well as members of the public through consultation sessions from June 2019 onwards.

15. We also welcome feedback through electronic or hard copy mail, with the subject header "Better competency development for safe and quality dental care for patients" to the following addresses. We request that respondents indicate their names, contact numbers and e-mail addresses so that we may contact them for clarifications or responses, if any.

Email: Enquiries@dentalcouncil.gov.sg

Singapore Dental Council
81 Kim Keat Road
#09-00 NKF Centre
Singapore 328836
Attention: Registrar, Singapore Dental Council



DR CHNG CHAI KIAT

REGISTRAR, SINGAPORE DENTAL COUNCIL
CHIEF DENTAL OFFICER, MINISTRY OF HEALTH

TERMS OF REFERENCE AND COMPOSITION OF WORKING COMMITTEE

1. To assist MOH in reviewing the current categorisation of dental procedures¹ and defining the appropriateness of the scope of practice for the different levels of dental expertise, in particular, that of dental specialty care in both public and private sector.
2. To assist MOH in reviewing and formulating the corresponding training/ competency requirements for dentists and dental institutions in Singapore for each level, taking into consideration factors such as:
 - a. optimal patient care and safety;
 - b. capacity and adequacy of current dental manpower supply and expansion plans to training resources; and
 - c. current and projected demand for dental procedures.
3. To recommend a seamless transition plan for the implementation of the above without compromising the ongoing provision of dental services.
4. To assist MOH in the engagement of the professional dental community, where relevant, on the feasibility of the above recommendations and implementation plan.

| S/N | Name | |
|--------------------|----------------------|--|
| Chairperson | | |
| 1. | Prof Chew Chong Lin | President, Singapore Dental Council |
| Members | | |
| 2. | Dr Chng Chai Kiat | Chief Dental Officer, Ministry of Health Registrar, Singapore Dental Council |
| 3. | Dr Andrew Ow | President, College of Dental Surgeons, Singapore |
| 4. | A/Prof Wong Mun Loke | Vice Dean, Academic Affairs, Faculty of Dentistry, National University of Singapore |
| 5. | Dr Lim Lii | President, Singapore Dental Association |
| 6. | Dr Goh Khean Teik | Director, Manpower Standards & Development, Ministry of Health |
| 7. | Dr Phua Tin Cock | President, College of General Dental Practitioners, Singapore |

Note - The Working Committee was appointed in November 2017, and reappointed till 30 November 2019.

¹ At present, there is no official standardised categories of dental procedures.