

Delegation: Limited to Clinical Competency Evaluations and Clinical Competency Preparatory Courses

Introduction

College publications contain practice parameters and standards which should be considered by all Ontario dental hygienists in the care of their clients and the practice of the profession. College publications are developed in consultation with the profession and describe current professional expectations. It is important to note that these College publications may be used by the College or other bodies in determining whether appropriate standards of practice and professional responsibilities have been maintained.

This Standard applies to CDHO registrants who delegate the controlled act of “*scaling teeth and root planing, including curetting surrounding tissue*” for the purpose of assessing individuals in the course of a clinical competency evaluation or assisting individuals preparing for the clinical competency evaluation. This Standard should be read in conjunction with the CDHO *Standard of Practice for Self-Initiation* and the CDHO *Dental Hygiene Standards of Practice*.

The objective of this Standard of Practice is to communicate the professional standards and the College’s expectations for CDHO registrants involved in such delegations.

Legislation

The CDHO is governed by the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 (RHPA)*, the *Dental Hygiene Act, 1991 (DHA)* including subsequent amendments. Controlled acts are procedures that could cause harm if they are not performed safely, appropriately and effectively by individuals with the requisite knowledge, skill and judgment. “*Scaling teeth and root planing, including curetting surrounding tissue*” and any other procedure performed below the surface of the teeth, are controlled acts under the *RHPA*.¹ Dental hygienists are specifically authorized to perform “*scaling teeth and root planing, including curetting surrounding tissue*” through the *Dental Hygiene Act, 1991*, in one of two ways: (i) through self-initiation, subject to certain conditions, or (ii) where there is an ‘order’ of a registrant of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario (RCDSO)². In addition, dental hygienists can also perform the controlled act if an exception applies or if they receive a delegation from another practitioner who is authorized to perform it.

¹ See paragraph 2 of subsection 27(2) of the *RHPA*.

² See section 5(1) of the *DHA*.

Exceptions Under *RHPA*

The *RHPA* allows individuals fulfilling the requirements to become a registrant of a health profession to perform controlled acts that fall within the scope of practice of his or her future profession, as long as those acts are done under the direction and supervision of a registrant of the profession.³ This is what occurs in the academic setting. In addition, an individual who is fulfilling a requirement for registration such as a clinical competency evaluation may perform the controlled act in a specific supervised setting for the purpose of evaluation of that applicant's skills. This exception does not apply to individuals who have completed their schooling and wish to prepare for a clinical competency evaluation.

Delegation

There are a number of significant barriers to delegating the controlled act of “*scaling teeth and root planing, including curetting surrounding tissue*” by a dental hygienist. Firstly, it is only potentially available for dental hygienists who are authorized to self-initiate the controlled act; it is not available for those authorized by an order of a dentist or through an exception to the controlled acts rules. Secondly, the delegating dental hygienist is responsible to ensure that none of the specified contraindications are present before or during the procedure. It is the CDHO's view that this duty is personal to the delegating dental hygienist. Thirdly, the delegation must comply with accepted standards of practice.

Therefore, delegation of the controlled act of “*scaling teeth and root planing, including curetting surrounding tissue*” is generally not available, with one narrow exception.

Indications for Use of this Standard of Practice

A dental hygienist who is authorized by CDHO to self-initiate “*scaling teeth and root planing, including curetting surrounding tissue*” may delegate these procedures, in whole or in part, under the following circumstances:

- The individual who is receiving the delegation must have completed all other requirements for registration with CDHO
- The delegator is either a full-time or part-time dental hygiene educator who has previous clinical teaching and evaluation experience with dental hygiene students
- The delegation is part of a structured program acceptable to CDHO
- The delegation is to facilitate applicants who require clinical practice prior to CDHO's clinical competency evaluation
- The delegator is a registrant in good standing with CDHO and is authorized to self-initiate
- The delegator personally reviews the client's medical history and the treatment plan developed by the applicant
- The delegator supervises the treatment in a manner consistent with all of the circumstances, evaluates the outcomes and provides feedback to the applicant
- Record keeping is in line with the CDHO Records Regulation

The CDHO views this narrow exception to be necessary to enable applicants to prepare for registration. This exception is particularly important to enable CDHO to meet its obligations to international applicants in a manner consistent with the *Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006* amendments to the *Regulated Health Professions Act* as monitored by the Office of the Fairness Commissioner.

³ See section 29(1)(b) of the *RHPA*.

Performance Expectations for the Delegating Dental Hygienist

A dental hygienist, delegating the authorized act of “*scaling teeth and root planing, including curetting surrounding tissue*”, demonstrates the standard by:

Assessment

1. Prior to delegating the authorized act, the registrant:
 - makes sufficient inquiries of the applicant to ensure that s/he is competent to perform the delegated act,
 - reviews the treatment plan,
 - personally reviews the client’s medical history.

Risk

2. Prior to delegating the authorized act, the dental hygienist:
 - assesses the risks of delegating the authorized act and ensures that the risks are relatively low and that the applicant is safe to proceed.

Authorization

3. Prior to delegating the authorized act, ensuring that s/he is authorized to self-initiate the act through the authorizing mechanisms available in the *RHPA* and *DHA*.

Competence

4. Being able to demonstrate her or his competence to delegate the authorized act through authorization from the CDHO to self-initiate and through evidence of clinical teaching experience in a CDAC accredited school.

Accountability

5. Assuming accountability for decisions and actions related to the performance of the authorized act.
6. Assuming responsibility for the performance and outcome of the authorized act.

Professional Responsibilities

7. Delegating the authorized act in accordance with applicable legislation, regulations or standard of practice of the profession, including:
 - (a) **transparency** – informing the client that the procedure is being performed under delegation and the authority for that delegation,
 - (b) **consent** – obtaining informed consent, which may include a requirement that the client be advised of the registration status of the person who is performing the procedure, and
 - (c) **recordkeeping** – recording the fact and details of the delegation including the name of the registrant delegating the procedure and the name of the individual performing the procedure.

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