

From: Melinda Mazengarb
To: [dentalboardconsultation](#)
Subject: Submission for independent practice of OHT hygienist
Date: Sunday, 13 May 2018 8:34:03 PM

Dear Dental board,

I will keep this short as I'm sure you have numerous submissions to get through.

I write to you in support of the proposed changes to Dental therapist and hygienists current restrictions to practice.

As it stands, as an OHT I treat on average 14 patients per day. I do this within my scope of practice and without for the most part direct supervision from a dentist. With this said, there is always a dentist available for consult on the rare occasions when I do need them and if changes were to occur, this current arrangement would still be very much in place. I am also well aware of my scope and limitations and always refer to specialists whenever it's required.

My employer has been a dentist for 47 years and says to me on almost a daily basis "your knowledge when it comes to the paediatric patient far surpasses mine and you are far better equipped to handle Children's behaviour in the Dental chair than I could ever be or have the time or patience for.

I have an incredibly forward thinking and supportive employer and this is why I am so upset to be reading the derogatory and ill informed comments from other dentists on the DBA website, most of which don't seem to have the faintest idea of what these proposed changes actually even mean.

One dentist likened OHTs to monkeys and another said a public warning should be put out to patients about their safety and welfare.

I have worked in both public and private practice for the the past 8 years, never have I had a complaint about my work or professionalism from either patient or employee. At no point do I work outside my scope and I very much doubt any of my colleagues would either if we are to have the lingering cloud of "structured professional relationship" removed. If anything, the extra responsibility and liability these changes will bring to individual OHT clinicians will only increase the care and caution we already employ with each and every one of our patients on an almost daily basis because who is going to be silly enough to risk their career on working out of their scope?

As I see it there is a high level of fear mongering occurring amongst dentists at an ever increasing pace, who believe these changes mean hygienists and therapists will suddenly be allowed to start working outside our scope in which we have formally trained and educated, as I see it there is one main perpetrator leading this charge.

I hope that like my employer, you can see past this outdated attitude to OHTs and hygienists and can see your way forward into making these changes which our profession desperately needs and deserves. These changes are long overdue.

I would like to leave you with a discussion I had with a junior dentist yesterday in the lunchroom during a discussion about this very topic. He said to me "therapists and hygienists have the lowest level of dental knowledge, no offense but when I take out a child's tooth I understand the reason in which I'm doing so to the betterment of my patient. The difference between me and you is that you have no idea why you're taking out that tooth or the long term complications that might bring with it" this particular dentist would not listen to me tell him my degree and tertiary education (all four years of it) did in fact give me this knowledge. Of course I know the indications and contraindications of ANY treatment I perform. What university would send students out into the workforce without being qualified in the field we are practicing?

Three hours later at the end of the day (as it always seems to happen of course),

a 5 yr old Child walked in with a horizontal root fracture of his 51. The same dentist who had belittled me in front of my colleagues earlier in the day, is now standing in front of this patient and his mother in utter panic with no idea what to do and as we were the last two left in the surgery for the day had to ask for my help and what to do. I ended up treating the patient while said dentist hid in his surgery, supposedly "too busy" to deal with it. I'm still waiting for my apology or maybe even just a thank you...

As it stands, this dentist is still my supposed "superior" under the current guidelines.

This is just one of any situations I've had to deal with during my time as an OHT.

Just let us do what we are good at, let us do what we are trained and highly skilled at doing without the red tape. Give dentists the freedom to practice the things they are in fact superior at without the fear of letting us do the work we are trained in for fear we may do something wrong with their name attached to it. We are already excellent members of the Dental team, the only thing that stands to change is an improved outcome for our patients and the recognition we are owed.

Thank you for your time

Kind regards
Melinda Mazengarb (OHT)