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Council 2018-2020

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6 May 2019

SDA PRESS RELEASE

In view of the recent articles in the Straits Times and Today newspapers, the Singapore Dental Association would like to weigh in on the issues.

At the heart of the matter is a new competency framework being proposed and considered by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Singapore Dental Council (SDC). It relies on the premise that dental general practitioners are inadequately trained in certain procedures and that there has been a rise in complaint cases of these procedures against dentists. It purports to improve the competency of dentists by subjecting them to further training.

However, due to the lack of clarity provided by MOH/SDC, this has bewildered many dentists that there is a sudden need for competency training for procedures that they have been carrying out safely and effectively for generations. Taking into consideration the feedback and sentiments collated from our members, who ranges a broad spectrum of dentists, the SDA is of the strong opinion that dental graduates of the National University of Singapore and MOH recognized dental schools worldwide, are sufficiently competent in their skillset to treat patients safely. This same competency also ensures that there is ability to make sound clinical judgement to refer for specialist management in cases of complexity beyond their ability. This negates the need to train dentists further as this system of risk stratifications are already in place.

Dentists in Singapore are already subjected to a minimum 70 hours of continuing dental education (CDE), amongst the highest in the world. Many of them take courses and workshops to train themselves further in advanced procedures.

Patient safety is a top priority for all dentists. It is at the heart of all we do. While we understand that MOH and SDC's deep concern for public safety, SDA would like to make the following suggestions:

- (1) To avoid the large resources needed to further train all dentists, all current existing dentists could be "grandfathered". Training could start with new intakes of students. This serves to acknowledge the training and experience that dentists have accumulated. The public has a trusting good relationship with most dental general practitioners. We believe, this bears testament to the competency of our dentist and that this beneficial relationship should continue,
- (2) Collaborate with the Faculty of Dentistry to strengthen the curriculum of future generations of dentists, to evolve the training in tandem with new advances in technology.
- (3) To integrate and combine this competency framework into the existing CDE program, allowing recognition as part of the CDE hours. This prevents additional onerous amount of training requirements to be placed on future dentists.
- (4) CDE courses can be strengthened through accreditation of core courses and streamlined to meet the needs of the majority of dentists. This will allow younger, less experienced dentists to receive adequate primary training, and flexible enough to allow more experienced dentists to develop more advanced skills. Accreditation of courses can provide standardization of course curriculum and enable uniformity in training.
- (5) Should there be perceived high risk procedures that warrants MOH/SDC call for stricter level of training, to consider with proper justifications, a minimum.

We reiterate that patient safety is our utmost priority, and we call upon MOH and SDC to engage SDA in further dialogue and consultations to, seek common ground and co-create a favorable outcome for all stakeholders.