

**Information Paper  
Legislative Council  
Panel on Health Services  
Meeting on 14 December 1998**

**A Proposal on  
Registration of Ancillary Dental Personnel**

**Purpose**

In the past few years there has been a debate on whether statutory registration should be introduced for regulating the ancillary dental personnel. A report has been produced by a working group under the Dental Sub-committee (DSC) of the Health and Medical Development Advisory Committee (HMDAC). This paper outlines the relevant developments in the past few years and the main points in the Report.

**Background**

2. Ancillary dental personnel (ADP) include dental therapists (DTs), dental hygienists (DHs), dental technicians (DTechs) and dental surgery assistants (DSAs). Some details regarding their scope of work, estimated workforce, training opportunities and employers are attached at **Annex**.

3. The 1991 report of the Dental Sub-committee of the then Medical Development Advisory Committee (MDAC) recommended that a statutory registration system for ADP should be introduced. The objectives of the registration system are:

- (a) to protect the public from potential health hazards arising from services rendered by unqualified personnel;
- (b) to maintain and improve the standards of practice within the disciplines;
- (c) to give proper recognition and status to qualified members of the disciplines; and

(d) to establish a framework for the regulation of professional practice and conduct.

4. The then DSC considered that it was appropriate to have a separate piece of legislation to regulate the practices of the four categories of ADP, modelled on the Supplementary Medical Professions Ordinance (Cap 359).

5. Two consultation exercises were conducted in 1993 and 1996. In the 1993 consultation exercise, while the ADP were generally in support of the proposed registration, they expressed concern about the structure and representation of the proposed statutory bodies and the availability of training opportunities to supplement the registration system. In the 1996 consultation exercise, objections to the compulsory registration of ADP were raised by the dental practitioners and purportedly, the DSAs in the private sector. They were concerned about inadequate training facilities, impact on manpower supply and the financial and operational implications.

6. In an effort to reconcile the views and concerns with regard to the proposed registration of ADP, the matter was referred back to the DSC for further consideration. At its meeting in September 1996, the DSC recommended that a **Working Group on the Registration of Ancillary Dental Personnel** (the Working Group) should be set up to study the issue. A twelve-member Working Group chaired by Professor Peter YUEN Pok-man, an HMDAC member, was appointed and commissioned by the DSC in January 1997. Other members included representatives of the four categories of ADP from both the public and private sectors, and representatives from the Faculty of Dentistry of the University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Dental Association and the Department of Health.

#### **Working Group on the Registration of Ancillary Dental Personnel**

7. The terms of reference of the Working Group are as follows:

- (a) to review and update the 1991 recommendation on the registration of ADP;
- (b) to review the roles and practices of the ADP;

- (c) to advise on the implementation approach of the registration issue; and
- (d) to advise on the education and training of ADP.

8. The Working Group held meetings from February to September 1997, conducted special consultation with the DSA in the private sector and studied the issue of training and education for the ADP. The Chairman also held informal discussion sessions with individual ADP groups, the Hong Kong Dental Association, dental laboratory owners, the Department of Health and the Vocational Training Council.

9. During the study period, press releases and press interviews were made to publicize the Working Group's tasks and solicit views from both the ADP and the public on the proposed registration.

#### **Issues discussed**

10. The Working Group had discussed the following issues at length:

- (a) Review of the 1991 DSC recommendation on the registration of ADP;
- (b) International practices on registration of ADP;
- (c) Roles and practices of the ADP in Hong Kong;
- (d) Concerns of ADP and non-ADP groups on the proposed registration;
- (e) Education and training for ADP in Hong Kong;
- (f) Registration options for ADP; and
- (g) Structure of a statutory registration body.

## **Recommendations**

11. The Working Group finalized its Report in November 1997. The recommendations in the Report are summarized below:

- (a) Courses should be offered in modes which would facilitate attendance by the DSAs and DTechs in the private sector;
- (b) Initiatives for institutions to organise self-financing basic training programmes for DSAs and DTechs, and continuing education courses for all four categories of ADP should be facilitated;
- (c) ADP training programmes should be independently validated;
- (d) DTs should be registered under a single class with no grandfather clause;
- (e) DHs should be registered under a single class with no grandfather clause;
- (f) Voluntary registration should be implemented for DSAs initially, and the situation should be reviewed for possible mandatory registration in the future;
- (g) DTechs should be registered under three classes: registered, enrolled and trainee classes, with grandfather clause. Each dental laboratory should have at least one registered DTech and there should be an appropriate ratio of registered DTechs to enrolled / trainee DTechs. The system should be reviewed in future; and
- (h) The statutory body for the registration of ADP should be one Council for all four categories of ADP.

**Views of the Dental Sub-committee and the Health and Medical Development Advisory Committee**

12. The DSC and the HMDAC discussed and endorsed the Report of the Working Group at its meetings in late 1997 and early 1998 respectively. The Report was then handed over to the Administration for its further consideration.

**The Administration's consideration**

13. As reflected in the long debate that has been carried out in the past few years among the professionals and parties involved, the proposal for introducing a statutory registration system for ADP is of some controversy and needs detailed consideration, and probably further consultation with those who may be affected. Resource implications arising from the implementation of the proposed system are also of concern. The Administration is considering the recommendations made in the Working Group's Report.

Health and Welfare Bureau  
Government Secretariat  
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**Ancillary Dental Personnel in Hong Kong**

	<b>Dental Hygienists</b>	<b>Dental Therapists</b>	<b>Dental Technicians</b>	<b>Dental Surgery Assistants</b>
Scope of Work	<p>Can undertake the following procedures under the supervision of registered dentists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● cleaning &amp; polishing of teeth</li> <li>● scaling of teeth</li> <li>● application of fluoride solutions or other prophylactic solutions to the teeth</li> <li>● oral health education</li> </ul>	<p>Carry out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● simple operative dental work, simple extraction and preventive measures</li> <li>● oral health education to patients up to the age of 18, under supervision of dental officers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Do not provide direct service to patients.</li> <li>● They work in dental laboratories and are responsible for the fabrication of dental prostheses to the specifications of dentists</li> </ul>	<p>Assist dentists at the chairside in the treatment and care of patients. They are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● preparing patients for dental treatment</li> <li>● care of equipment, instruments and materials</li> <li>● simple laboratory procedures (pouring dental impressions)</li> <li>● oral hygiene instructions</li> </ul>
Estimated workforce (as at May 1996)	50	300	650	2000
Training opportunity	1-year certificate course PPDH <sup>1</sup>	3-year certificate course at TSK DTTS <sup>2</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 2-year Diploma Course at PPDH</li> <li>● apprenticeship in private dental laboratories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 1-year Certificate Course at PPDH</li> <li>● Government in-service training programme</li> <li>● In-service training by private dental practitioners</li> </ul>
Employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Government</li> <li>● PPDH</li> <li>● Private sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Government only</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Government</li> <li>● PPDH</li> <li>● Private sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Government</li> <li>● PPDH</li> <li>● Private sector</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Prince Philip Dental Hospital<sup>2</sup> Tang Shiu Kin Dental Therapists Training School