

For Discussion
on 14 February 2000

Legislative Council Panel on Health Services
Registration of Ancillary Dental Personnel

Purpose

The Administration has given further consideration to the proposal to introduce a statutory registration system for Ancillary Dental Personnel (ADP), taking into account Members' views expressed at the meeting on 13 December 1999. This paper sets out the revised proposals.

Background

2. We have informed Members that while the ADP generally supported some form of statutory registration system for all four types of ADP, the dental profession did not consider compulsory registration of ADP necessary. At the meeting in December 1999, we proposed to extend the existing enrolment system for dental hygienists (DHs) to dental technicians (DTechs) and maintain the status quo for the other types of ADP.

3. Some Members commented that the enrolment system should be extended to dental therapists (DTs) in addition to DTechs, in anticipation that private sector institutions might choose to employ DTs in the future. Some Members also suggested to require dentists to provide systematic training to Dental Surgery Assistants (DSAs).

The Administration's response

(a) Enrolment for dental therapists

4. DTs are trained to perform minor dental work only for patients under 18 and their scope of work is limited accordingly. At present, all DTs are employed by the Department of Health. Since they all work under the direct supervision of dental officers in accordance with clear and strict practice guidelines, an additional regulatory system is considered not necessary. Nevertheless, we shall monitor the situation closely and reconsider as and when necessary.

(b) Systematic training for dental surgery assistants

5. We agree that DSAs should be given adequate training to equip them to discharge their duties properly. It would be in the interest of dentists, who are ultimately accountable for the work of DSAs, to train their DSAs for the assigned duties. As a first step, we need to agree with the parties concerned on the following :

- (a) whether there should be a set of common core modules for all DSAs or is it sufficient for a DSA to be trained only for the duties he is assigned to by his present supervisor;
- (b) whether and how to accredit the training offered by different providers;
- (c) how to enforce the training requirement and who should be liable if such requirement is not complied with; and
- (d) who should be subject to the training requirement.

(c) *Proposed enrolment for dental technicians*

6. We are gathering the views of DTechs on the proposal to extend the enrolment system to them. Subject to their views, we shall work out the details of the enrolment system in consultation with the relevant parties.

Advice Sought

7. In summary, we propose to extend the existing enrolment system for DHs to DTechs, and to require dentists to provide proper training to their DSAs. Members are invited to comment on the recommendations above.

Health and Welfare Bureau

February 2000