



12 Nov 2017

Announcement by the College of General Dental Practitioners, Singapore

The College of General Dental Practitioners Singapore would like to address the issues raised in the Channel Five feature and the related article on Channel News Asia on 9 Nov 2017 (“Nearly 300 complaints against dental practitioners in 4 years: Singapore Dental Association”).

The news video and article suggest that general dentists are unable to handle orthodontic cases. This is untrue. General dentists have been treating patients for their orthodontic concerns for a very long time, with high success and satisfaction from their patients. The College is in full agreement with the Singapore Dental Council’s stand that there are no restrictions on the scope of work practised by dentists. The College also agrees with the Council that dentists should practise within their competence and refer patients appropriately. General practitioners or specialists regardless of their designations should be properly trained for the prescribed tasks when treating patients.

Since 1999, the College has worked hard to provide pertinent continuing education courses for all dentists in Singapore and the region. For the past ten years, the College has been running a basic orthodontic course to equip general practitioners with the fundamental knowledge of orthodontic diagnosis. This course is taught by a prominent local orthodontic specialist and former lecturer of orthodontics in NUS. In addition, we have further initiated an advanced course taught by an internationally acclaimed orthodontist. This course is conducted over three years and involves more than 300 hours of lectures, case discussions and hands-on practical lessons. The emphasis of the course, beyond proper diagnosis and practical skills, is the identification of complex cases that require co-management and referral to specialist colleagues. We believe that this close co-operation between dental professionals serves the best interests of our patients.

Hence, the College is obliged to strongly rebut Dr Elaine Tan’s statement, quoted in the video and article, that “when a general dentist does braces, they lack in examination and diagnosis”.

Many general dentists have undergone advanced training in various dental specialities and are competent to manage routine and moderate cases. In so doing, dentists provide more avenues through which the population can receive the dental care they need. Minister for

Health, Mr Gan Kim Yong had stated the importance of training generalists in medicine. We believe the same applies for dentistry. The Chief Dental Officer at the Ministry of Health, Associate Professor Patrick Tseng, also stated that “at the national level there is a need to provide training to our general dental practitioners to update and upgrade their skills and knowledge and for them to understand and appreciate their limitations so that they can provide safe, and affordable care and refer appropriately...a good working knowledge of orthodontics is certainly one of them... it is good that general dental practitioners can provide some level of orthodontic care to the public-This ensures that basic orthodontic treatment remains affordable and accessible to as many in our country as possible.”

General dentists fulfil the majority of dental services for our population and are already managing that range of cases satisfactorily. Dental specialists are the practitioners to manage the complex cases. This has and should continue to be the best dental health delivery system for the public in Singapore.

Prepared by:



Dr T C Phua
President
College of General Dental Practitioners Singapore