



College of General Dental Practitioners (Singapore)
UEN: T00SS0008J
10 Collyer Quay, #03-05, Ocean Financial Centre, Singapore 049315
www.cgdp.org.sg

4 May 2019

PRESS STATEMENT

1. The College of General Practitioners Singapore refers to the articles published on 3 May 2019 by Today ("Some dentists unhappy over proposal on further certification for 'higher risk' procedures") and The Straits Times ("Dentists upset over talk of more training required for some procedures")
2. The College was founded in 1999 and counts over 600 general dentists as members. General dentists in turn make up 85% of all dentists working in Singapore.
3. The College, its members, and many general dentists believe strongly in continuing professional education (CPE). In fact, dentists have to fulfil at least 70 hours of CPE every two years in order to renew their practising certificate. Many dentists far exceed the required number of hours, in order to provide better and safer care to our patients. Many dentists also travel overseas at their own expense to further themselves. Hence, the spirit of continual improvement is strong amongst dentists, who undergo further training voluntarily and willingly.
4. The College has concerns principally because it understands that MOH's proposed policy seeks to exclude general dentists from procedures classified by MOH as specialist-level, and reserve those procedures exclusively for specialists. The College understands that such exclusion of general dentists may possibly be regardless of a general dentist's training, expertise and experience, or informed consent by the patient, or the obtaining of any Certificate of Competency. In other words, this part of dental practice will be completely off-limits for general dentists, unless they become specialists. The College does not think that such a framework, if indeed intended by the MOH and SDC, is necessary, effective or in the interests of the profession or dental patients
5. Many general dentists have on their own accord undergone further training to perform many advanced procedures competently and safely, and have been doing so for many years. The College is worried that if general dentists are now prohibited from performing advanced procedures, the cost to patients will increase significantly as they will only be able to receive treatment from specialists. Furthermore, there may be bottlenecks and longer waiting times to see specialists, which will compromise our patients' treatment.
6. The College believes that the reason for some of the general anxiety and confusion on the part of general dentists is the lack of clarity and detail on the proposed policy, and the absence of any compelling reasons for it. No official consultation paper has been issued, and the discussions of the MOH or SDC committee on the proposed policy have not been made available to the profession generally. The College understands that one of the prime motivations for the proposed policy is an increase in complaints by patients, but the relevant data on complaints or disciplinary cases specifically involving general dentists attempting procedures outside their sphere of competence is not available. All this could have led to



College of General Dental Practitioners (Singapore)
UEN: T00SS0008J
10 Collyer Quay, #03-05, Ocean Financial Centre, Singapore 049315
www.cgdp.org.sg

misinformation, misunderstanding and speculation. The College invites MOH and SDC to clear the air and explain to the profession the justifications and detailed supporting data for the proposed policy, the key features of the proposed policy and how it would impact general dentists, and possible solutions or mitigating measures in relation to likely increases in costs for patients as well as compliance costs for dentists, and the alternative options that are being or have been considered.

7. The College shares MOH's priority on ensuring that dentists are properly trained to carry out procedures safely and competently. To that end, the College has set up a committee to explore alternative proposals that can balance our patients' need for safety, affordability, and access to care, as well as allow general dentists to undertake procedures within their training, expertise and experience. Our committee is exploring options such as mentoring, supervision of procedures, and clinical guidelines that will provide a well-balanced solution. Adopting a blunt and mechanistic classification to exclude general dentists from what has for many years been an important part of their professional practice, when they can obtain the appropriate training, expertise and experience to perform them, will ultimately be detrimental to our patients and unfair to general dentists.

Yours sincerely,

Dr TC Phua
President