

Q1. Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to remove the 18-year age limit for restorative activities from the OHT scope of practice including:

I absolutely agree with the proposed changes to remove the 18-year old age limit for restorative activities from the OHT scope of practice with the exclusion placed on the OHT's scope until the completion of an accredited programme. Firstly, there is a need for opportunities to be provided in the dental and oral health therapy profession allowing practitioners to up skill and work towards additional scopes of practice. The use of an OHT could be hugely beneficial in both the public and private sector, utilising OHT for simple restorative activity. This would allow dentists to concentrate on more complex and specialised dental care. Removing the age limit for dental treatment with an OHT could improve access to patients, in particular in rural communities where dentists service / access is limited. This would enhance equitable access for adult dentistry throughout the country, helping to improve the quality of life for many New Zealanders. Oral Health Therapists currently diagnose caries and treat permanent teeth within their scope up until the age of 18. This is the same dentition as a 18+ years of age, therefore this would not be out of the expertise of an oral health therapist. Peer contact between therapists and dentists is now more achievable with technology ie digital radiography, emails / smart phones and the use of tele-health.

This would ultimately contribute to a good working relationship between Oral Health Therapists and dentists and utilise each professions scope to full capacity. From a public dental perspective, oral health therapists could be utilised to provide restorative care (with consultation of a dentist) to low income and vulnerable adult population groups in a variety of settings. There is a very high demand to provide affordable dentistry in New Zealand and this one positive step towards the overall solution required. Oral Health therapists should not be viewed as a threat to the dentists, rather an asset to the profession, enhancing team work and engagement between the two professional groups.

Q2. Do you have any specific feedback on the proposed amendments to the OHT scope of practice, prescribed qualifications or competencies as set out in appendices 1 & 2?

I agree with the accredited programme as a requirement before having the exclusion to treat 18 years + removed from the OHT scope of practice. I think this additional training will excite and provide an excellent opportunity for those wanting to extend their clinical skills and excel in the dental oral health therapy profession. Currently, there is no additional post-graduate study an oral health therapist can undertake to gain further clinical skills that will contribute to a scope of practice. All health professionals in New Zealand should have the opportunity to progress or specialise within their career. This would also ensure oral health therapists have sufficient education regarding

medical histories / pharmacology, and in future if this becomes a part of the bachelor degree.