

Scope of practice for dental therapy

The practice of dental therapy is the provision of oral health assessment, diagnosis, management, treatment and prevention of any disease, disorder or condition of the orofacial complex and associated structures in accordance with a dental therapist's approved education, training, experience and competence. Dental therapy services are provided to children and adolescents up to age 18.

Disease prevention, oral health promotion and maintenance are core activities, aimed at achieving and maintaining oral health as an integral part of general health.

The scope of practice encompasses the dental therapist competencies.

Practice in this context goes wider than clinical dental therapy practice to include teaching, research, and management, given that such roles influence clinical practice and public safety. Areas of dental therapy practice which were not included in a practitioner's training should not be undertaken unless the practitioner has completed appropriate training and practises to the standards required by the Standards Framework for Oral Health Practitioners.

Prescribed qualifications for the scope of practice for dental therapy

New Zealand

- Bachelor of Oral Health, University of Otago before 1 November 2017
- Bachelor of Health Science in Oral Health, Auckland University of Technology before 1 November 2017
- Certificate in Dental Therapy or Certificate in Dental Nursing (issued by the Department of Health or a New Zealand educational institution), and
approved experience in the provision of dental therapy services within the scope of dental therapy practice (including interpreting periapical and bitewing radiographs under the direction and supervision of a dentist who can attest to competency), and
evidence of successful completion of Dental Council approved courses for Pulpotomies and Stainless Steel Crowns and Radiography and Diagnostic Radiography, or an exemption certificate for radiography issued by the New Zealand Medical Radiation Technologists Board current as at 18 September 2004
- Diploma in Dental Therapy (issued by a New Zealand educational institution), and
approved experience in the provision of dental therapy services within the scope of dental therapy practice (including interpreting periapical and bitewing radiographs under the direction and supervision of a dentist who can attest to competency), and
evidence of successful completion of Dental Council approved courses for Pulpotomies and Stainless Steel Crowns and Radiography and Diagnostic Radiography (excluding a Diploma in Dental Therapy issued by University of Otago or an exemption certificate for radiography issued by the New Zealand Medical Radiation Technologists Board current as at 18 September 2004)
- Bachelor of Health Science (Endorsement in Dental Therapy), University of Otago.

Australia

- an Australian Dental Council accredited programme that included education in Pulpotomies, Stainless Steel Crowns, Radiography and Diagnostic Radiography and registration in Australia¹
- a Dental Board of Australia approved programme of study providing a qualification for the purposes of registration in dental therapy in Australia that included education in Pulpotomies, Stainless Steel Crowns, Radiography and Diagnostic Radiography and registration in Australia².

Other

- undergraduate dental therapy degree or diploma, or an undergraduate dental degree, and a pass in the Dental Council Dental Therapy Registration Examination.

Scope of practice for adult care in dental therapy

The practice of dental therapy on adults is the provision of oral health assessment, treatment, management and prevention services within the general dental therapy scope of practice for adult patients aged 18 years and older. Depending on the dental therapist's qualifications this is provided in a team situation under direct clinical supervision³ or the clinical guidance⁴ of a practising dentist or dental specialist. Disease prevention, oral health promotion and maintenance are core activities.

Practice in this context goes wider than clinical dental therapy practice to include teaching, research, and management, given that such roles influence clinical practice and public safety. Areas of adult care in dental therapy practice which were not included in a practitioner's training should not be undertaken unless the practitioner has completed appropriate training and practises to the standards required by the Standards Framework for Oral Health Practitioners.

Prescribed qualifications for the scope of practice for adult care in dental therapy

Prescribed qualifications for practising under clinical guidance

- Certificate in Dental Therapy (issued by the Department of Health or a New Zealand educational institution) and registration in the scope of practice for dental therapy and a Dental Council accredited qualification in adult dental therapy practice⁵
- Diploma in Dental Therapy (issued by a New Zealand educational institution) and registration in the scope of practice for dental therapy and a Dental Council accredited qualification in adult dental therapy practice
- Bachelor of Health Science (Endorsement in Dental Therapy), University of Otago and registration in the scope of practice for dental therapy and a Dental Council accredited qualification in adult dental therapy practice

¹ Before 30 June 2010, and before 17 October 2010 for Western Australia

² From 1 July 2010 onwards, and 18 October 2010 onwards for Western Australia

³ **Direct clinical supervision** means the clinical supervision provided to a dental therapist by a practising dentist or dental specialist when the dentist is present on the premises at the time the dental therapy work is carried out

⁴ **Clinical guidance** means the professional support and assistance provided to a dental therapist by a practising dentist or dental specialist as part of the provision of overall integrated care to the adult patient group. Dental therapists and dentists/specialists normally work from the same premises providing a team approach. Clinical guidance may be provided at a distance but appropriate access must be available to ensure that the dentist or specialist is able to provide guidance and advice, when required and maintain general oversight of the clinical care outcomes of the adult patient group.

⁵ Currently no training programmes have been accredited

- Bachelor of Health Science in Oral Health, Auckland University of Technology and registration in the scope of practice for dental therapy and a Dental Council accredited qualification in adult dental therapy practice
- Bachelor of Oral Health, University of Otago and registration in the scope of practice for dental therapy and a Dental Council accredited qualification in adult dental therapy practice.

Prescribed qualifications for practising under direct clinical supervision

- Currently no training programmes have been accredited.

For applications received before 19 September 2004

- Certificate in Dental Therapy (issued by the Department of Health or a New Zealand educational institution); registration in the Scope of General Dental Therapy Practice and approved experience in the provision of oral healthcare to adults under the direction and supervision of a dentist, who can attest to competency
- Diploma in Dental Therapy (issued by a New Zealand educational institution); registration in the Scope of General Dental Therapy Practice and approved experience in the provision of oral healthcare to adults under the direction and supervision of a dentist, who can attest to competency
- Bachelor of Health Science (Endorsement in Dental Therapy), University of Otago; registration in the Scope of General Dental Therapy practice and approved experience in the provision of oral healthcare to adults under direction and supervision of a dentist, who can attest to competency.