

## Fabrication of Dental Appliances / Restorations that Involve Contact with the Public

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*"It is the duty of this College at all times to serve and protect the public, and to exercise its powers and discharge its responsibilities under all enactments in the public interest."*

In keeping with this duty it is the policy of the College to support Registrants who are routinely asked to provide services integral to the fabrication of dental appliances that involves direct contact with members of the public.

**Registrants who choose to welcome patients into their laboratories should be aware that provision of dental technician services directly to the public increases their responsibility and their exposure with respect to professional conduct and health and safety issues.**

The following policy and guidelines<sup>1</sup> are designed to raise Registrants' general awareness of these responsibilities and exposures and to provide information about general professional protocols that should, and in some cases must, be observed in order to provide - *and be seen to be providing* – safe, professional services.

Registrants should refer to these guidelines when they are asked by a dentist to consult or provide technical service with respect to provision of a repair, a correct shade/ the aesthetic positioning of ceramic or acrylic teeth in a removable appliance, or any other activity in which they may come into direct contact with the public while providing dental technology services.

Registrants may also refer to various sections of the Code of Ethics, and Standards of Practice, found in the Bylaws and the College's published Infection Control Guidelines as they pertain to the issues addressed below.

These new "Contact with the Public" policy guidelines address the following three areas of responsibility:

1. TECHNICAL
2. HEALTH AND SAFETY
3. INTERPERSONAL

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*These guidelines are not intended to be either comprehensive or definitive. The College requires all dental technicians to be informed and current with respect to infection control procedures through their continuing education program. Registrants are also expected to access other sources of information including the College's General Infection Control Guidelines, and to obtain up-to-date information from their family doctor and organizations such as Workers' Compensation Board, Health Canada Online, and the Centre For Disease Control and Prevention with respect to infection control issues.*

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## 1. TECHNICAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Registrants providing services directly to the public:

- 1.1 Are strongly advised to record the details and sequence of laboratory procedures that are to be observed by all laboratory employees who work directly with the public.
- 1.2 Will ensure that the services provided directly to the public occur in a dedicated area or, at minimum, in a designated area where the following protocols can be observed.

### **Dedicated or Designated Area**

A dedicated or designated area is that part of the laboratory that is set aside for, or can be set aside for, the purpose of seeing patients. Registrants must ensure that this area meets the following guidelines:

- 1.3 The area must be adequately lit, well organized, and reflect a professional environment appropriate for the service being provided.
- 1.4 The area must have a hand washing facility or have one that is located within visible distance of the patient, and be equipped with an appropriate anti-bacterial soap and paper towels.
- 1.5 Surfaces should not be porous, edges and joints should be sealed with a waterproof sealant, and the area must be cleaned frequently with an appropriate disinfectant.
- 1.6 Housekeeping surfaces such as floors and sinks must be cleaned regularly and be free of visible debris. Cleaners with germicidal properties should be used to clean these surfaces.

When working with a patient Registrants must ensure that:

- 1.7 In the event they are providing colour matching services that requires the removal of a temporary, crown or bridge, that the patient attends the laboratory with a loosened restoration.
- 1.8 They prepare and package an appliance or restoration safely for delivery and provide clear instructions, when applicable, with respect to transportation and / or handling of the appliance or restoration between the laboratory and patient's home or dental clinic.

Because public confidence and a patient's comfort level is greatly increased when they know they are being provided with quality services by a regulated health care professional, Registrants are encouraged to display materials indicating their registration or regulatory status in the dedicated or designated area. The College is pleased to provide Registrants with suitable material for this purpose.

Registrants might also consider making available any other written materials that would assist the patient in understanding the role and expertise of the dental technician. The College also encourages Registrants to advise their clients of the protocols observed when providing services to their clients' patients.

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## 2. HEALTH AND SAFETY RESPONSIBILITIES

The transmission of diseases can occur in the dedicated or designated area of the dental laboratory from

- Improper hand washing and gloving
- Inadequately cleaned and sterilized instruments
- Poorly cleaned and disinfected surfaces

and from

- Breaks or lesions in the patient's or Registrant's hands or skin
- Respiratory contamination/ airborne pathogens
- Improper handling of oral devices
- Exposure to mucous membranes
- Exposure to blood borne pathogens

### **Universal precautions**

As not all patients may have infectious diseases that can be identified or are identifiable by the Registrant, universal precautions must be implemented. We refer Registrants to the College's General Infection Control Guidelines, and repeat precautions for the specific services that involve interaction with a patient, as follows.

To ensure a safe and healthy work environment Registrants must ensure that:

- 2.1 All surfaces in the dedicated or designated area are uncluttered, easily cleaned and disinfected. Registrants might consider the use of tessler covers or other barrier materials.
- 2.2 All equipment, instruments, countertops and other dental equipment surfaces, such as handles or surfaces on lights, cabinets, drawer pulls, tray tables, chair switches or any other surface that is likely to be touched, should be disinfected or covered with an appropriate barrier material.
- 2.3 Surfaces that a patient could have touched are newly disinfected for each patient.
- 2.4 Colour matching shade tabs or buttons, or other items that will be in or near the patient's mouth, are newly disinfected - *and seen to have been newly disinfected* - for each patient.
- 2.5 The finished restoration or appliance is cleaned and disinfected, prepared and packaged safely for delivery.
- 2.6 They do not provide services to patients if they have open sores or lesions on - exposed areas of the skin or are considered to be infective.

### **Immunological and physical protection**

For their own personal health and safety, as well as that of their families and patients, Registrants are strongly advised to access up-to-date information and advice from their family doctor regarding the need to have vaccinations currently recommended for dental health care providers including:

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- Hepatitis B Virus
  - Measles
  - Polio
  - Mumps
  - Rubella
  - Influenza

To reduce the risk of disease transmission Registrants are reminded that:

- 2.7 A new face mask must be worn for each patient. An approved dry face mask is likely to be an effective barrier preventing the transmission of inhaled or exhaled potentially infectious materials. Eyewear can remain in place but should not be touched with ungloved hands.
- 2.8 Eyes are entry portals for many bacteria and viruses. Consideration should be given to the use of an appropriate barrier such as glasses, goggles or a face shield.
- 2.9 Hands must be adequately washed - *and seen to be washed* - before putting on clean gloves, after the gloves are removed, and after any bare-handed touching of contaminated surfaces or objects [Refer to standard protocol on how to wash hands in the dental care environment.<sup>1</sup>]
- 2.10 Only new gloves are used - *and seen to be used* - with each patient. In the event that registrants elect to use latex gloves, inquire as to whether or not the patient has a latex allergy. [Refer to standard protocol on how to choose, put on, remove and dispose of gloves used for this purpose and in this setting.<sup>1</sup>]
- 2.11 They should be aware of the risks of re-contamination caused by touching any object or item that has not been disinfected, once clean gloves are put on.
- 2.12 Ideally, when traveling from one work area to another, a new clean work gown should be worn for each patient. Alternatively, a clean work gown must be maintained for use in the dedicated or designated area only.
- 2.13 Laboratory attire should be washed appropriately and separately from any household or personal attire. [See standard protocol for waste & laundry management]

### 3. INTERPERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Registrants will know that the requirements implicit in a professional relationship begin with the first point of contact with a patient, and that effective professional communication is essential to assure a good patient/client/Registrant relationship.

When working with a member of the public Registrants are expected to:

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<sup>1</sup> As an example of standard protocols referred to in 2.8, 2.9 and 2.13, see the Workers' Compensation Board's WorkSafe brochure HIV/AIDS, and Hepatitis B and C: Preventing Exposure at Work. The College also encourages Registrants to keep up-to-date with changes and new developments that may impact on their health and safety responsibilities. Useful reference sources include, Canadian Dental Association [www.cda-adc.ca](http://www.cda-adc.ca) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) Health Canada [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca) Organization for Safety and Asepsis Procedures [www.osap.org](http://www.osap.org) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Oral Health Program) [www.cdc.gov/oralhealth](http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth) The World Health Organization <http://www.who.int/en>

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- 3.1 Be mindful of the need for exemplary body hygiene that is essential in any activity that involves close contact with patients.
  - 3.2 Consider the possibility of allergies in some patients to scents in make up and perfume.
  - 3.3 Present themselves in a manner that merits the respect of the public for the health profession of dental technology in accordance with the Code of Ethics and Practice Standards set out in the Colleges' Bylaws.
  - 3.4 Treat patients pleasantly in a professional and courteous manner and be considerate of any concerns they may have about visiting the laboratory.
  - 3.5 Explain the services you are going to provide to the patient and document any possible issues that arise at this time. If appropriate, discuss the situation with the dentist before providing services especially if the patient's expectations appear unreasonable or different from the dentist's prescription.

### **Professional Misconduct of a Sexual Nature**

To avoid any real or perceived problems in this area Registrants are strongly advised to:

- 3.6 Schedule patient appointments for services during normal business hours.
- 3.7 Exercise their professional judgement to determine when it would be prudent to have a person of the same gender witness the provision of services, especially if the door to the dedicated or designated area will remain closed.

While some physical contact may be necessary during the provision of dental technology services, Registrants should remember the following:

- 3.8 Do not engage in unnecessary touching of any kind. Be aware of the implications or possible misinterpretations of gestures, tone of voice or behaviour, which may cause discomfort, awkwardness or embarrassment.
- 3.9 That it is inappropriate to make remarks, inquiries or jokes about a patient's body, attire or gender.
- 3.10 That there is no sexually explicit or other sexually oriented material that might be considered offensive in the dedicated or designated area, or visible to the patient.

Registrants are reminded that professional misconduct of a sexual nature is specifically defined in the Dental Technician bylaws as:

*behaviour that includes but is not limited to*

- (a) physical sexual relations,*
- (b) touching of a sexual nature, and*
- (c) behaviour or remarks of a sexual nature,*

*between the registrant and a patient. . . . if the conduct is unwelcome or exploits the professional . . . relationship between the individuals.*

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Registrants are at risk of being found guilty of sexual misconduct even if they did not intend to offend, based on the patient's perception. "It was a joke" or "I meant the remark as a compliment" may not be an acceptable defence.

Professional misconduct of a sexual nature, if proven by a patient in a court of law, may lead to a civil claim for damages or a criminal conviction.

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## **THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DENTAL TECHNICIAN**

**The College reiterates that the Supervising Dental Technician is completely responsible for all dental technology services that are provided to the public, and will be held accountable to the College for those services.**

The College does not at this time require dental technicians to carry individual professional liability insurance, but recommends that all registrants obtain professional liability insurance, particularly those who are responsible for services provided directly to the public.