



AUSTRALIAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION INC.

POLICY STATEMENT

SPECIALISATION IN DENTISTRY

1 Definitions

- 1.1 **SPECIALISATION** is the exclusive practice of a recognised specialty of dentistry by an appropriately qualified practitioner.

Notwithstanding the delineation of a specialty, the area defined may be practised by registered dentists provided they possess the necessary skills, experience and expertise.

- 1.2 A **SPECIALIST PRACTITIONER** or **SPECIALIST** is one who practises a recognised specialty, possesses a higher qualification relevant to this area of dentistry, and has fulfilled any other statutory requirements within the State or Territory of practising and has been so registered.

In the absence of appropriate credentials, limitation of practice does not confer specialist status; nor does possession of a higher qualification and limitation of practice to an area of dentistry not formally recognised as a specialty.

- 1.3 **BOARD** is a State or Territory dental registration board.

2 Principles of Specialisation

- 2.1 The recognition of specialties and specialist practitioners serves to identify to the public and to the dental and allied professions individual practitioners who have special competence in a specified area of dental practice.
- 2.2 The establishment of a dental specialty must address a clear health need and public demand.
- 2.3 Only fully qualified and registered dentists should be eligible for training as specialists.
- 2.4 Specialisation should not in any way curtail the right of the general practitioner to practice any discipline of the profession.
- 2.5 The use of a designated specialist title will generally imply that the specialist is restricted by law, or by regulation, to the practice of that specialty. Specialists might be allowed to practice in other fields of dentistry.
- 2.6 Specialties must maintain internationally accepted standards of education, training and practice.

- 2.7 The acquisition of specialist status and the use of the designated title of the specialty should be strictly regulated.
- 2.8 Specialisation also serves to stimulate organisation, education and research in a particular area of dentistry.

3 Recognition of Dental Specialties

To be recognised as a dental specialty, any proposed specialty should meet the following criteria. It should :

- 3.1 Have a clear need and demand of a substantial portion of the population.
- 3.2 Be important to the health of individual patients.
- 3.3 Be an area of dentistry in which general practitioners may have need to refer patients for provision of expert services in a particular area of dentistry.
- 3.4 Require special knowledge and skills, superior to undergraduate dental education and training, in order to perform procedures of an advanced, difficult, or unusual nature.
- 3.5 Be definable in order to prescribe the scope of and restrictions upon the specialty.
- 3.6 Be one in which approved educational institutions conduct accredited formal courses to qualify practitioners appropriately.
- 3.7 Have an established specialist organisation.
- 3.8 Be recognised by the Australian Dental Association Inc. [ADA].

4 Requirements for Specialisation

A person seeking recognition as a specialist in a chosen area shall have :

- 4.1 Successfully completed an acceptable undergraduate course in dentistry.
- 4.2 Attained the legal status to practise dentistry.
- 4.3 Completed a mandatory period in the general practice of dentistry in private practice, hospital or other institutional practice, a public health service or the Armed Services.
- 4.4 Completed a course of graduate education leading to an acceptable higher qualification relevant to the area of specialisation.

5 Education Requirements

- 5.1 The minimum period of postgraduate education, including training/experience for any specialty, should preferably be three years full time, but longer clinical training may be deemed to be appropriate for some specialties.
- 5.2 Only those courses of specialist education which have been accredited by the Australian Dental Council or courses deemed equivalent by Boards should be recognised as acceptable qualifications for specialisation.
- 5.3 Completion of research, no matter how advanced or valuable, should not be considered as sufficient grounds for registration in any specialty.

6 Registration

- 6.1 Specialist status shall be subject to registration conferred through statutory powers vested in State or Territory Dental Boards.
- 6.2 State or Territory Dental Acts should prescribe :
 - 6.2.1 areas of dental specialisation,
 - 6.2.2 requirements for registration as a dental specialist.

7 Currently Recognised Specialties

The specialties recognised by the ADA shall be designated and defined as follows:

7.1 Dento-maxillofacial Radiology

That part of dental practice which deals with diagnostic imaging procedures applicable to the hard and soft tissues of the oral and maxillofacial region and to other structures which are relevant for the proper assessment of oral conditions.

A Specialist in dento-maxillofacial radiology shall have the title of Dento-maxillofacial Radiologist.

7.2 Endodontics

That part of dental practice which deals with the morphology, physiology, and pathology of the human tooth and, in particular, the dental pulp, root and peri-radicular tissues. It includes the biology of the normal pulp, crown, root and peri-radicular tissues and the aetiology, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases and injuries that affect these tissues.

A Specialist in endodontics shall have the title of Endodontist.

7.3 Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery

That part of dental practice which deals with the diagnosis, surgical and adjunctive treatment of diseases, injuries and defects of the human jaws and associated structures.

A Specialist in oral and maxillofacial surgery shall have the title of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon.

7.4 Oral Medicine

That part of dental practice which deals with the clinical diagnosis, assessment and principally non-surgical, pharmacological management of anatomical variants, pathological conditions, diseases and pain of the dental, oral and adjacent anatomical structures and the dental/oral manifestations and complications of systemic diseases, pathology and conditions and their treatment.

A Specialist in oral medicine shall have the title of Oral Physician.

7.5 Oral Pathology

That part of dental practice which deals with diseases of the teeth, jaws, oral soft tissues and associated structures, studies their causes, pathogenesis and effects, and by use of clinical, radiographic, microscopic and other laboratory procedures establishes differential diagnoses and provides forensic evaluations.

A Specialist in oral pathology shall have the title of Oral Pathologist.

7.6 Orthodontics

That part of dental practice which deals with the study and supervision of the growth and development of the dentition and its related anatomical structures, including preventive and corrective procedures of dentofacial irregularities requiring the re-positioning of teeth, jaws, and/or soft tissues by functional or mechanical means.

A Specialist in orthodontics shall have the title of Orthodontist.

7.7 Paediatric Dentistry [Paedodontics]

That part of dental practice which deals with the prevention and the treatment of dental diseases and abnormalities in children and their associated developmental and behavioural problems.

A Specialist in paediatric dentistry shall have the title of Paediatric Dentist or Paedodontist.

7.8 Periodontics

That part of dental practice which deals with the prevention, recognition, diagnosis and treatment of the diseases and disorders of the investing and supporting tissues of natural teeth or their substitutes.

A Specialist in Periodontics shall have the title of Periodontist.

7.9 **Prosthodontics**

That part of dental practice which deals with the restoration and maintenance of oral health, function and appearance by coronal alteration or reconstruction of natural teeth, or the replacement of missing teeth and contiguous oral and maxillofacial tissues with substitutes.

A specialist in prosthodontics shall have the title of Prosthodontist.

7.10 **Public Health Dentistry**

That part of dental practice which deals with the community as the patient rather than the individual, being concerned with oral health education of the public, applied dental research and administration of dental care programmes including prevention and control of oral diseases on a community basis.

A Specialist in Public Health Dentistry shall have the title of Public Health Dentist.

7.11 **Special Needs Dentistry**

That part of dental practice which deals with patients where intellectual disability, medical, physical or psychiatric conditions require special methods or techniques to prevent or treat oral health problems, or where such conditions necessitate special dental treatment plans.

A Specialist in Special Needs Dentistry shall have the title of Special Needs Dentist.

8 Obligations of Specialists

8.1 A specialist's primary purpose must be to render a service to patients and the community which requires knowledge and skill beyond those which could normally be expected in the relevant area of dental practice.

8.2 In treating a referred patient, a specialist shall :

- S keep the referring practitioner informed of progress.
- S not make additional referral without the consent of the referring practitioner.
- S not perform services which are outside his/her specialty without the consent of the referring practitioner.
- S after completion of treatment direct the patient back to the referring practitioner.

8.3 A specialist shall guide and educate general dental practitioners to higher levels of competence.



Policy Statement 2.4

Adopted by Federal Council, November 15/16, 2001.
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