1. Introduction

1.1 Dentists have had independent prescribing privileges for many years. While prescribing is only a minor part of most dental practices compared with most medical practices, dentists prescribe those medications needed for dental practice e.g. analgesics, antibiotics and anxiolytic medications.

1.2 To ensure dentists are able to prescribe safely on graduation, the current university training programs for student dentists include appropriate biomedical sciences to support safe prescribing.

1.3 Governments regulate the prescribing of medications.

1.4 Medication safety is an important professional standard recognised by several government instrumentalities.

1.5 Safe use of medications including prescribed medications is based on the principles of sound diagnosis, appropriate dental treatment and safe use of only the medications that are needed. These principles and current recommendations about the use of medications in dentistry are published in Therapeutic Guidelines, Oral and Dental.

1.6 ePrescriptions are a component of the Australian Government eHealth initiatives.

Definitions

1.7 ALLIED DENTAL PERSONNEL are those, other than dentists, working in the provision of dental services.

1.8 BOARD is the Dental Board of Australia.

1.9 DENTAL PRACTITIONER is a person registered by the Board to provide dental services.

1.10 DENTIST is an appropriately qualified dental practitioner, registered by the Board to practise all areas of dentistry.

2. Principles

2.1 Safe and competent prescribing requires dentists to know when and when not to prescribe. It depends on a sound knowledge of the pharmacology of medications including their interactions with other prescribed and non-prescribed medications.

2.2 Inappropriate prescribing can lead to ineffective or unsafe treatment, can prolong or exacerbate illness, can distress or harm the patient and can be costly. In the case of antibiotics, it can contribute to global antimicrobial resistance. Liaison with other treating health providers is a valuable strategy to minimise risk.

2.3 Dental practitioners must only perform those dental procedures for which they have been formally educated and trained.

2.4 Safe patient handover practices are critical to medication safety.

3. Policy

3.1 Dentists must comply with all legal requirements pertaining to prescribing.

3.2 The training of dentists must continue to meet the standards of the NPS Prescribing Competency Framework.

3.3 Dentists must be able to prescribe, supply or administer any appropriate drug for dental patients for the purposes of dental treatment (including drugs of addiction).

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1 This Policy Statement is linked to other Policy Statement: 6.17 Sedation in Dentistry.

3.4 Dentists should be able to generate prescriptions via a computer and participate in ePrescribing.

3.5 The scope of practice and training of allied dental personnel does not and should not include prescribing. This includes dispensing of medications.

3.6 There should be uniform medications and poisons legislation in Australia.