

Policy Statement 3.12 – Benefits of Defined Health Professions

Position Summary

The extensive and expanding complexity of healthcare requires well defined health professions. They ensure optimal health outcomes, the advancement of the art and science of each field and provide patients with a basis for trusting the competence and ethical integrity of individual practitioners.

1. Background

- 1.1. All health professions have history and culture and represent a discipline of health science with a defined body of knowledge.
- 1.2. Research and knowledge gains within each health field have led to an increased variety of practitioners and increasingly specialised healthcare providers.
- 1.3. Defined health professions offer patients a basis for trust in the competence, knowledge and safety of practitioners.
- 1.4. Health practitioners belonging to a defined profession and associated disciplines benefit the public as this leads to higher standards of care via:
 - adherence to a code of ethical conduct based on a shared commitment to always give priority to the needs and interests of the public they serve above their own;
 - a collegiate environment that encourages sharing of knowledge for the benefit of patients;
 - ongoing information and support from profession-based member organisations to their members;
 - support and mentoring of students and new health providers by their colleagues;
 - providing relevant continuing professional development activities;
 - better focused and supported research;
 - specific professional indemnity arrangements with patient safety and quality of care feedback loops; and
 - encouragement of volunteer service in Australia and overseas.
- 1.5. The overlap of different professions' areas of interest and evidence base means that a number of different professions may have overlapping scopes of practice.
- 1.6. Dentists in Australia have a strong culture of cooperation by sharing experiences and knowledge and participating in collaborative practice.

Definitions

- 1.7. A DENTIST is an appropriately qualified dental practitioner, registered by the Board to practise all areas of dentistry.
- 1.8. COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE is when multiple health practitioners from different occupations work in a coordinated manner with patients to deliver the highest quality care and includes inter-

and intra-professional collaboration. Collaborative practice can also be described as interdisciplinary care, multidisciplinary care, shared care, team care or collaborative care.

2. Position

- 2.1. The extensive and expanding complexity of healthcare requires well defined health professions to ensure:
 - optimal health outcomes;
 - the advancement of the art and science of each field; and
 - patients are provided with a basis for trusting the competence and ethical integrity of practitioners.
- 2.2. The different health professions should work together to:
 - ensure a better understanding of each other's knowledge and skills;
 - provide a patient-centred approach to health care;
 - adopt a Collaborative Practice approach to treating patients where appropriate; and
 - promote consistent health messages.
- 2.3. Where the scope of practice of a profession is expanding into an area of practice of another profession, the requirements of knowledge and skill for both professions should be equivalent.

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