

When VIP treatment means

Registration was an important change, making the whole dental team recognised professionals. But what is exactly expected of us? **Janet Collins**, the GDC's head of standards, outlines the Scope of Practice

As registrants with the General Dental Council (GDC) you'll be aware that we have certain standards you're expected to meet in order to remain registered with us and legally able to work in the UK.

The main aim of all dental professionals should be to 'put patients first and act to protect them'. To help you do this we produce a number of guidance documents, including 'Standards for dental professionals' and 'Scope of Practice'.

Our Standards guidance is an ethical guide for you as a professional. It lays out six key principles and you undertake to abide by these when you register with us. We expect you to use your judgement to make decisions in light of the principles and apply them to your daily work. If your behaviour is called into question, we will compare your conduct with principles laid out in our Standards guidance.

Another key document is Scope of Practice. This is not a list of tasks for you to carry out, it simply sets out the skills and abilities each registrant group should have. It also lists additional skills you might develop after registration to

increase your scope of practice. And lastly it lists 'reserved duties' which you can only practise if you are registered in a particular group.

As a dental hygienist, therapist, or any other dental care professional you're expected to use your professional judgement to decide if you are trained and competent to do something, and you should bear in mind that you may have to justify your actions.

Before we issued the Scope of Practice guidance in January 2009, we would have told you that you could only do what you were trained and competent to do.

Scope of Practice now makes it clear what each member of the dental team could and should be doing, as well as what they cannot and should not be doing. Your original qualification in dental hygiene and/or therapy is taken as showing that you are competent in the qualification-level skills for your profession. If you want to practise any additional skills, you need to be sure that you are competent to do so.

So, who's now a VIP?

There's a section for everyone who needs to be registered with us:

- Dental nurses
- Orthodontic therapists
- Dental hygienists
- Dental therapists
- Dental technicians
- Clinical dental technicians
- Dentists

If we take dental hygienists as an example, the guidance says they can, among other things, provide dental hygiene care to a wide range of patients, apply topical treatments and fissure sealants and give patients advice on how to stop smoking.

They might go on to learn how to provide tooth whitening to the prescription of a dentist, prescribe radiographs, administer inhalational



sedation or remove sutures after a wound has been checked by a dentist. But they don't diagnose disease, restore teeth, carry out pulp treatments, adjust unrestored surfaces or extract teeth.

The complete list of registrants and their Scope of Practice are available on our website www.gdc-uk.org.

When we introduced Scope of Practice, we made a commitment to review it on a regular basis to make sure it remains relevant in the light of new developments in dentistry. We are planning to do exactly that within the next 24 months.

We often get asked how you can acquire the additional skills laid out in Scope of Practice and that is really up to you. It could be in-house training or external courses. Just make sure you record all the training that you do and remember the onus is on you to be sufficiently trained and competent.

It's probably also worth pointing out the difference between scope of

Continued on page 44



Janet Collins has been Head of Standards at the GDC since 2006. Prior to taking up that role her experience at the Council included handling patient

complaints, the launch of the Council's continuing professional development (CPD) requirements, leading its work with dental hygienists and therapists and, most recently, managing the introduction of registration for the other DCP groups.

gold standards for all

Boutique manager **Kavita Verma** guides us through one patient's journey where every member of the dental team plays a role

As the old saying goes, patients don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care. At Sparkle, we work on the premise that every aspect of the patient's contact with us is a great opportunity to demonstrate our dedication, care and concern, from their first enquiry through an advert, to the warm welcome at each visit, to the care that we extend beyond the time the patient completes treatment – in fact to us 'everything matters'.

The environment we have created lends itself to a pleasurable visit and every room has been planned to maximise patient comfort. Attention to detail is paramount, and we demonstrate this to our patients in innovative ways. Our washroom has hand-rolled towels and complimentary lip balms, hand creams and dental kits. Even the lilies, alliums and irises in our courtyard garden are colour-co-ordinated in shades of purple to match our brand colours!

To illustrate how we make our patients feel special at Sparkle Dental Boutique, let me share with you Lisa's (patient) journey and the attention to detail that went into each aspect of her treatment in order to give her the smile of her dreams.

Lisa's journey

Recommended to us by Steve, one of our existing patients, Lisa made contact with the practice via our website enquiry form. She was able to browse the gallery section of our website, showing her numerous examples of our dentistry.

As Lisa had requested us to contact her by telephone, we greeted her using a pre-rehearsed telephone script and gathered as much information as possible. A welcome letter – and a courtesy call 24 hours before her scheduled appointment time – reinforced our commitment to welcome Lisa to the practice.

On the day of Lisa's consultation, all the team were given background information about Lisa and primed on the importance

of creating a fantastic first impression at our morning team huddle. Wing (our receptionist) was ready to meet Lisa as she arrived at the practice and, after a polite introduction, welcomed her into our private consultation room where her medical and social history were taken. Our Sparkle PowerPoint presentation was running in the background as usual, showcasing our work. This helped to reassure her that she was in safe hands and that we had extensive experience in this field.

While waiting to be seen, we pampered Lisa with a visit to our relaxation room complete with massage chair so that she could relax before seeing Dr Sunita Verma. Lisa selected a mug of Horlicks from our 'Sparkle-icious' menu and, as she was visiting the practice during Christmas, our seasonal menu offered mulled wine and mince pies in addition to our normal beverages and sugar-free condiments. We call these treats our 'warm fuzzies'.

Understanding our patients concerns, building relationships and making emotional connections is central to our practice's ethos and mission. Lisa shared information about the new man in her life, her work for British Airways as a bursar, her love of South African wine and her desire to go on safari once her smile makeover was complete – wine in hand, of course!

Each new patient is sent a handwritten card to thank them for choosing Sparkle. We also use these cards to celebrate patient birthdays, anniversaries, and any other great patient news.

Case presentation

Lisa was concerned about her discoloured and worn upper teeth that had been bothering her for quite some time. A full and comprehensive consultation was carried out, including a series of digital X-rays, photographs and an intraoral camera demonstrated to Lisa what we could see in her mouth and allowed



her to better understand her dental health by seeing what we could see. After compiling and evaluating all the diagnostic information, and reviewing the proposed computer-enhanced smile with Lisa, potential treatment options were discussed, including the option of no treatment. We do not recommend or suggest any treatment based on price or time restraints, ensuring that our patients receive treatment that meets their specific needs. A definitive treatment plan was agreed with Lisa, involving multiple

Continued on page 44

Kavita Verma is boutique manager at the multi award-winning west London's Sparkle Dental Boutique and BDA Good Practice regional consultant. For further details about the practice, visit www.sparkledental.co.uk.

In practice

Continued from page 28

practice and illegal practice because they are sometimes confused with each other.

If we receive information that a registrant is working outside their scope of practice, we can take action through our Fitness to Practise processes. Potentially, the person involved could be removed from our Registers, leaving them unable to work legally in the UK. Illegal practice is a very different thing. The Dentists Act 1984 makes it an

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offence for people who are not registered with us to practise dentistry in any way, or hold themselves out as practising or as being prepared to practise dentistry.

If we receive information that the law is being broken, we can instruct our solicitors to investigate and gather evidence. If we can get sufficient

evidence, and believe it to be in the public interest that we bring a prosecution, then we will instruct our solicitors to take the case to a Magistrate's Court. A fine can be imposed if the prosecution is successful.

Being a registered professional isn't easy. It's not just about saying the right things to the right people; it's about making sure professionalism runs through everything you do. Applying our standards to your daily work and working within your Scope of Practice will help you achieve that.

Continued from page 29

veneers. Lisa was shown an actual veneer and the use of an educational DVD helped her understand the procedure involved. As a belt and braces approach, we arranged for Lisa to speak with one of our other patients who had gone through similar treatment. This was really useful for Lisa to hear openly and honestly from one of our patients that she could relate to.

A full range of finance options were presented to Lisa. She opted to take advantage of our 5% courtesy discount for full payment before treatment began. Consent forms for treatment were completed.

Veneer preparation

As the preparation appointment would be lengthy, we had already obtained Lisa's 'shopping list' for a light breakfast and lunch from our refreshment menu, which would enable her to have a comfort break before, during and after her treatment.

Although we offer a selection of music from our CD library, we encouraged Lisa to bring in music of her choice so that it could be downloaded and played into the room where she was having her treatment. Lisa was offered a blanket and topical gel for pain-free anaesthesia. We kept her fully informed about progress during the procedure and gave plenty of praise and reassurance to keep her comfortable.

To supplement our explanations further, we gave written post-care instructions so that she would know how to look after her temporary teeth in between visits. A care pack, containing

pain relief, mouthwash, etc, was given to help ease any discomfort.

We use excellent laboratories that manufacture the highest quality work in order to provide beautiful, long-lasting restorations. We communicate all the specific details by way of digital photographs, smile analysis forms, laboratory prescriptions, emails and phone calls. We furnish the laboratory with accurate models, occlusal records to achieve ultimate phonetics, aesthetics and function.

The day following treatment, principal dentist Sunita called Lisa to make sure she was OK and answered any questions that she had. A few days later, at her review appointment Lisa had the opportunity to let us know of any adjustments she required to her temporary veneers that had been fabricated using a functional and aesthetic wax up. This was vital to providing the aesthetic, predictable result that Lisa desired. A week later, her final veneers were fitted, accompanied by the Sparkle guarantee.

The team approach

At the final appointment, the whole team came together to celebrate Lisa's new smile. We presented Lisa with a bottle of champagne and a card, signed by our team, as a special thank you for trusting us to look after her dental care. Another 'warm fuzzy' came by way of a complementary lifestyle photography voucher where her new smile could be captured.

Lisa was so pleased with the results that she sent us flowers, a thank-you card and a lovely testimonial! The touching

testimonials and thank-you cards that we regularly receive keep us motivated to find new ways for caring for our patients.

This year, we have introduced another innovation to keep in touch with our patients and letting them know they are valued long after their treatment is complete... one month after her last visit, we sent Lisa a 'smile celebration' photograph and a branded compact mirror.

Regular patients

Patients who visit the boutique for general dentistry are extended the same level of service and comfort as described above. For nervous patients, we encourage an informal visit to the practice so that we can introduce them to our team and show them that there is nothing to fear.

Our branded stationary, pens and carrier bags, convey a professional image. We note preference days for appointments and have priority lists to bring patients' appointments forward if they are available at short notice. We open the practice on a Saturday or late evening on request. We reinforce care by keeping in touch with patients in between visits through e-newsletters, Christmas cards, seasonal gifts such as chocolates and hampers.

We never forget that our patient referrals are our highest compliment and practice builder and we thank them through our gift referral scheme.

To thank Steve for recommending Lisa to our practice, we gave him our newly introduced 'Tea Experience Gift Voucher at the Ritz'.