

## Dental Hygienist Prescribers

The College of Registered Dental Hygienists of Alberta (CRDHA) is pleased to announce that the first group of dental hygienists to complete CRDHA requirements is now authorized to issue prescriptions for the narrow subset of drugs used in the provision of dental hygiene services.

The CRDHA grants prescribing authority to registrants who successfully complete the CRDHA's *Elements of Prescribing: A Pharmacy Refresher Course for Dental Hygienists*.

The CRDHA is responsible for issuing prescriber identification (ID) numbers to those registered dental hygienists (RDH) who successfully complete the required CRDHA course. The CRDHA maintains a list of authorized prescribers.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What requirements did the dental hygienist prescribers have to meet in order to be authorized to issue prescriptions?**

In addition to completion of the undergraduate dental hygiene education, which includes education in biochemistry, microbiology, pharmacology, anatomy and physiology, pharmacotherapies for specific oral health conditions, administration of local anaesthesia, and management of medical emergencies, these prescribers have completed the comprehensive 6 – 9 month course — *Elements of Prescribing: A Pharmacy Refresher Course for Dental Hygienists*. The goals of the course are to ensure a standard level of knowledge regardless of educational background or years of experience and to graduate safe, effective prescribers.

The layout of this self-paced, self-study course includes the following modules:

1. Professional Accountability, Communication & Collaboration
2. Decision Making Related to Medication Use
3. Principles of Pharmacology
4. Drugs Used in Dental Hygiene
5. Risk Management, Drug Errors & Medical Emergencies – includes reporting adverse drug reactions and use of a drug error management program.
6. Issuing a Prescription
7. Storage, Labeling, and Disposal

Throughout these modules, emphasis is placed on interdisciplinary collaboration and communication, as well as recognition of the additional responsibility that is placed on a prescriber.

In addition to completion of the course material, participants are required to successfully complete the following:

1. Assignments (pass mark 75%)
  - a. Activities include research on specific drugs, reporting of adverse reactions, issuance of legal prescriptions
2. Final Examination (pass mark 80%)

The course was designed over a 3-year period using a variety of subject matter experts that included pharmacists, dental hygiene educators, dentists, an addictions specialist, and a pharmacologist. The goal of the course is to ensure a standard level of knowledge for safe and effective prescribing.

The program delivery format has enabled registered dental hygienists across the province to access the Course. The initial intake included dental hygienists from as south as Lethbridge and as far north as Fort McMurray.

The dental hygienist participants practice in a variety of practice settings: community or public health, private practice, long-term care facilities (nursing homes), stand-alone dental hygiene clinics, and in a person's (client, patient) home.

### **What drugs will dental hygienist prescribers be able to prescribe?**

Section 13(1) of the *Dental Hygienists Profession Regulation*, which came into force on October 31, 2006, outlines the following restricted activities authorization:

d) to prescribe the following Schedule 1 drugs within the meaning of Schedule 7.1 to the Government Organization Act for the purpose of treating oral health conditions, providing prophylaxis and treating emergencies:

- (i) antibiotics;
- (ii) antifungal agents;
- (iii) anti-infective agents;
- (iv) antiviral agents;
- (v) bronchodilators;
- (vi) epinephrine;
- (vii) fluoride; \*
- (viii) pilocarpine;
- (ix) topical corticosteroids;

\* fluoride has been reclassified as a natural health product. Currently none of the oral care fluoride products require a prescription.

Further clarification about how these drugs may be used in dental hygiene practice, is available on the CRDHA's website at <http://www.crdha.ca>.

### **What are the parameters (restrictions) for dental hygienists who will be prescribing these drugs?**

The standards of practice for dental hygienists, (CRDHA's Code of Ethics, Practice Standards, and supporting Guidelines), include the following:

Dental hygienist prescribers:

1. Shall not prescribe drugs for themselves.
2. Shall only prescribe drugs for family members if they are clients of record and it is needed specifically for oral health treatment (dental hygiene need).
3. Shall not prescribe medications for off-label use unless the drug is part of a research project to investigate use of the drug to treat a documented dental hygiene need.
4. May issue stop orders for any previous prescriptions ordered by the dental hygienist (or another dental hygienist) that need to be cancelled.
  - a. Dental hygienist prescribers **must not** place stop orders on prescriptions issued by physicians, dentists or other health care providers.

For further information on CRDHA Standards of Practice and Legislation, go to: <http://www.crdha.ca/Members/LegislationandStandardsofPractice/tabid/91/Default.aspx>

## **How will dental hygienist prescribers update me if they prescribe a drug for one of my clients/patients?**

Dental hygienists will continue to collaborate with physicians to ensure safe and optimal drug therapy for their clients.

Dental hygienist prescribers are committed to ensuring that, if possible, the physician is informed of prescriptions issued by the dental hygienist. The dental hygienist will notify the physician to provide updates to the client information.

Additionally, once a prescription is filled, the patient/client's record on the Pharmaceutical Information Network (PIN) is updated by the pharmacist.

## **What if I have a concern about a dental hygienist prescriber?**

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the CRDHA office at (780) 465-1756 (Edmonton and area) or 1-877-465-1756 (outside of Edmonton area).