



TRAINING ROADMAP FOR

ORAL HEALTH THERAPIST IN SPECIAL CARE



MINISTRY OF HEALTH
SINGAPORE

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FOREWORD

I am delighted to introduce the training roadmap for oral health therapists in special care, aligning with the Ministry of Health's National Dental Strategy to address the evolving oral healthcare needs of a rapidly aging population and to strengthen our pool of dental practitioners trained in key areas. The training roadmap comprises guidelines that will help oral health therapists better understand the roles, responsibilities, and competencies expected in the provision of quality care to patients with special care needs, such as the elderly and individuals with cognitive disabilities.

The world's population is aging at a rapid pace, resulting in an increase in the prevalence of non-communicable diseases, including diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and stroke. Moreover, there is a growing prevalence of cognitive impairment, including dementia, among the elderly. This shift in disease patterns has substantial implications for the oral health of the residents of intermediate and long-term care facilities, such as nursing homes. Despite advancements in medical care, oral care for these individuals continues to be under-prioritized, placing the elderly at these facilities at a higher risk of dental issues and tooth loss. Studies have identified several barriers to providing oral health care to the elderly, including a low level of interest among dental practitioners in treating geriatric patients. This has resulted in a high prevalence of unmet dental needs in the elderly population, emphasizing the urgent need for alternative models of oral health care delivery.

Oral health therapists play a crucial role in addressing this issue and bridging this ever-increasing gap. They can assist the dental team by complementing the role of the dentist in providing oral health care to underserved segments of the population. This model has already been successfully implemented in several countries overseas. However,

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FOREWORD

the job scope of the oral health therapist is limited, and thus, upskilling the profession is a necessary step in the right direction. This also provides an avenue for oral health therapists to enrich their own professional journey. We hope that the training roadmap will better enable access to oral healthcare for individuals with special needs, where oral health therapists are trained in managing routine patient needs, while ensuring that those with more complex requirements receive timely oral health care.

On behalf of the Ministry of Health, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to members of the Expert Panel for Oral Health Therapy for their contributions over the past two years. I would also like to thank the Singapore Dental Council and members of the dental fraternity who have provided their insights, expertise, and experience in the formulation of the new roles.

These are exciting times for the oral health therapy profession as they rise to become even more valuable and indispensable members of the dental team. I wish all oral health therapists embarking on this new journey the very best as they pursue this higher calling.



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TRAINING ROADMAP FOR ORAL HEALTH THERAPIST IN SPECIAL CARE





JOB ROLE DESCRIPTION AND PRE-REQUISITES

	Oral Health Therapist (“OHT”) in Special Care	Senior Oral Health Therapist (“OHT”) in Special Care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job Role Description 	<p>An OHT in Special Care is responsible for assessing geriatric and special needs patients, performing therapeutic procedures and educating their caregivers.</p> <p>S/He may work in the Public Institutions and/or Intermediate and Long-Term Care (“ILTC”) Services facilities.</p> <p>S/He is required to possess good communication and problem-solving skills. S/He may work as part of a collaborative and interdisciplinary team.</p>	<p>A Senior OHT in Special Care is responsible for assessing and formulating treatment plans for geriatric and special needs patients, performing therapeutic procedures and educating their caregivers.</p> <p>S/He may work in Public Institutions and/or Intermediate and Long-Term Care (“ILTC”) Services facilities.</p> <p>S/He is required to be a transdisciplinary thinker who also possesses good decision making and leadership skills. S/He may work as part of a collaborative and interdisciplinary team.</p> <p>S/He supports staff management and team development activities.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job Role Pre-requisites 	<p>Qualifications: Minimum Diploma in Oral Health Therapy / Bachelor of Oral Health and registration with the Singapore Dental Council as an OHT under Part I of the Register of Oral Health Therapists</p>	
	<p>Type of work experience</p> <p>Minimum Part 1 OHT (Part 1 may be required when the settings are expanded to include e.g. ILTC settings)</p>	<p>Type of work experience</p> <p>Minimum 5 years after Part 1 OHT</p>



CRITICAL WORK FUNCTIONS AND KEY TASKS

Critical Work Functions	Key Tasks	
	OHT in Special Care	Senior OHT in Special Care
1 Conduct dental assessment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct an independent extra- and intra-oral assessment on geriatric and special needs patients presenting with complex medical histories, in a geriatric / palliative care setting 2. Execute sound oral hygiene care plan such as toothbrushing, oral toilet, diet advice in collaboration with patients' caregivers and staff 	
2 Plan treatment with registered Division 1 Dentist¹	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Present findings of assessment to registered Division 1 Dentist 2. Confirm treatment plan with registered Division 1 Dentist 3. Document findings from history taking, assessment, treatment plans, interventions, goals and outcome measures 4. Communicate the assessment results, treatment plan, goals and outcome measures to patient, caregiver and staff 5. Identify dental conditions and make the appropriate referrals to tertiary institutions for further management by dental specialists 	<p>Tasks performed by OHT in Special Care with the following addition:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Propose treatment plan with registered Division 1 Dentist
3 Perform expanded dental procedures as prescribed by registered Division 1 Dentist	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Render appropriate dental treatment according to the patient's needs, based on findings and treatment plan. 2. Transfer patients with and without the use of equipment for dental treatment. 3. Administer Inferior Dental Nerve (IDN) block 4. Remove post-surgical sutures 5. Apply Silver Diamine Fluoride 6. Restore carious teeth using the Atraumatic Restorative Technique (ART) 7. Restore Noncarious cervical lesions (NCCL) 8. Adjust over-contoured direct restoration 	<p>Tasks performed by OHT in Special Care with the following additions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Adjust dentures that are causing oral trauma 10. Extract very mobile permanent teeth that are at risk of aspiration if left in situ, with suturing if deemed necessary 11. Reduce dislocated temporomandibular joint (TMJ)

¹Under the Dental Registration Act 1999, persons who intend to practice dentistry in Singapore are required with the Singapore Dental Council under the appropriate register



CRITICAL WORK FUNCTIONS AND KEY TASKS

Critical Work Functions	Key Tasks	
	OHT in Special Care	Senior OHT in Special Care
4 Provide patient education to caregivers and healthcare professionals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Propose modifications to oral health regime based on patient's needs and caries risk 2. Teach patients and caregivers methods to enhance preventive oral health programmes through self-management strategies 3. Coordinate with relevant parties to support patients in achieving their treatment goals 4. Conduct hygiene training for other healthcare professionals and care givers 	<p>Tasks 1-3 performed by OHT in Special Care with the following addition:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Plan hygiene training for other healthcare professionals and care givers
5 Provide patient education to caregivers and healthcare professionals	<p>Not applicable</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mentor junior OHTs for professional development 2. Assess clinical competencies of staff 3. Lead inter-departmental initiatives to improve oral healthcare 4. Develop new clinical services 5. Conduct clinical audits
6 Perform clinical administration and operations	<p>Not applicable</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participate in the development of clinical practice guidelines and work processes 2. Monitor team's clinical and non-clinical key performance indicators (KPI) 3. Participate in the recruitment process of future Special Care OHTs 4. Manage Special Care OHT team in ILTC facilities



SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

Technical Skills & Competencies ("TSCs")	OHT in Special Care	Senior OHT in Special Care
Dental Inventory Maintenance and Management	Level 3	Level 4
Infection Control	Level 3	Level 4
Patient Assessment in Oral Health Therapy	Level 3	Level 4
Patient Empowerment on Oral Health Self-Care	Level 3	Level 4
Treatment Implementation in Oral Health Therapy	Level 3	Level 4
Critical Core Skills ("CCSs")	OHT in Special Care	Senior OHT in Special Care
Refer to Skills Future Singapore's (SSG) website for more information on CCS and their reference documents.	Adaptability (Intermediate)	Collaboration (Intermediate)
	Communication (Intermediate)	Decision Making (Intermediate)
	Learning Agility (Intermediate)	Developing People (Intermediate)
	Problem Solving (Intermediate)	Global Perspective (Intermediate)
	Transdisciplinary Thinking (Intermediate)	Transdisciplinary Thinking (Intermediate)



TECHNICAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

● TSC Category: Department Management		TSC: Dental Inventory Maintenance and Management
TSC Description	Perform inventory control and maintain dental equipment prior to usage	
TSC Proficiency Level	Level 3	
TSC Proficiency Description	Monitor and control resource material inventories and equipment	
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance requirements of department equipment • Documentation process and electronic management systems used for inventory management • Tracking systems for inventory management such as RFID • Processes to implement new tracking systems for inventory management • Safe disposal processes of resource materials • Audit requirements of inventory management • Relevant departments or personnel who should be involved for the maintenance and repair 	
Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage inventory stocktake and put-up procurement requests • Implement tracking systems for inventory management • Schedule regular inspections to check for cracks or damage prior to using any dental equipment or instrument • Dispose resource materials according to the department workplace safety and health procedures • Engage relevant parties in the organisation for the repair and maintenance of equipment according to the maintenance cycle • Prepare documentation on inventory levels and equipment status for audit purposes 	



TECHNICAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

● **TSC Category:** Department Management **TSC:** Dental Inventory Maintenance and Management

TSC Description	Perform inventory control and maintain dental equipment prior to usage
TSC Proficiency Level	Level 4
TSC Proficiency Description	Manage the maintenance of equipment in the department and develop proposals for new equipment
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthcare technology management cycles • Proposal development processes for procurement of new equipment • Procurement procedures for resource materials • Performance requirements of new equipment, including safety
Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check inventory levels against department and audit requirements • Prepare proposals and procurement requests for resource materials and new equipment for departments • Review documentation and audit reports on inventory levels and equipment status • Test new equipment procured for departments against expected performance criteria • Set up protocol for use of equipment • Manage budget cycles for facility • Oversee renewal of licences, inspection and preventive maintenance contracts for all relevant equipment and facility



TECHNICAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

● TSC Category: Quality and Patient Safety		TSC: Infection Control
TSC Description	Prevent the spread of infectious agents through compliance to good infection control practices and regular audits	
TSC Proficiency Level	Level 3	
TSC Proficiency Description	Maintain infection prevention and control frameworks through monitoring staff, performing audits and client education	
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infection control and prevention audit procedures • National infection control guidelines • Client teaching guidelines on infection prevention and control protocols • Education guidelines on changes in infection prevention and control protocols 	
Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform infection prevention and control checks on work areas, safety devices and equipment, staff and clients • Conduct client education on infection control 	



TECHNICAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

● **TSC Category:** Quality and Patient Safety **TSC:** Infection Control

TSC Description	Prevent the spread of infectious agents through compliance to good infection control practices and regular audits
TSC Proficiency Level	Level 4
TSC Proficiency Description	Facilitate the department's/organization's infection prevention and control frameworks
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infection control and prevention audit procedures relevant to the department, sub-specialty, and institution • Performance indicators of infection prevention and control frameworks • Methods for monitoring infection incidents
Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct audits on the proper application of infection control and sanitation procedures across departments in accordance with the hospital policies and guidelines • Evaluate effectiveness of infection prevention and control frameworks • Monitor prevalence of infections in patients and staff • Liaise with colleagues, other healthcare professionals regarding the implementation of appropriate infection control measures • Conduct continuing education to keep staff current about changes in protocols and standards relating to infection control



TECHNICAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

● TSC Category: Patient Care		TSC: Patient Assessment for Oral Health Therapy
TSC Description	Select and apply assessment methods and tools appropriate for patients and interpret findings	
TSC Proficiency Level	Level 3	
TSC Proficiency Description	Conduct evidence-based assessments for routine cases and seek guidance for complex special care cases	
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criteria for different assessment methods and tools • Types of tools required for assessments • Limitation of various assessments and implications of common diagnosis • Appropriate follow-up assessments for specific presentations • Typical presentations in uncommon medical/dental conditions • Range of dental presentations and issues faced in severe systemic conditions • Differential diagnosis techniques • Multi-disciplinary assessment methods • Appropriate case documentation 	
Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independently plan and prioritise key assessment areas • Independently perform assessments for routine and basic cases • Analyse assessment results for routine and basic cases in consultation with a clinical supervisor • Identify patients' suitability for further assessments in consultation with a clinical supervisor • Interpret results for complex cases in consultation with a clinical supervisor • Integrate case findings information from case notes and other stakeholders in consultation with a clinical supervisor • Report unexpected client responses or problem areas in the conduct of the assessments to the clinical supervisor • Document the assessments conducted in case notes in accordance with organisational procedures and guidelines 	



TECHNICAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

● **TSC Category:** Patient Care **TSC:** Patient Assessment for Oral Health Therapy

TSC Description	Select and apply assessment methods and tools appropriate for patients and interpret findings
TSC Proficiency Level	Level 4
TSC Proficiency Description	Conduct and perform evidence-based assessments for routine and complex cases and provide guidance to junior OHTs during patient assessments
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of evidence-based assessment methods for complex disorders • Range of dental presentations and issues faced in severe systemic conditions and their management protocols • Advanced clinical methods and techniques for managing special care patients
Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select appropriate assessment methods for complex cases • Integrate and modify the assessment methods where relevant in consultation with clinical supervisor • Involve multidisciplinary teams in assessment of complex cases in consultation with clinical supervisor • Analyse and interpret results for complex cases in consultation with clinical supervisor • Provide feedback to support learning • Supervise junior therapists in assigned clinical areas



TECHNICAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

● **TSC Category:** Patient and/or Client Education and Health Promotion **TSC:** Patient Empowerment on Oral Health Self-care

TSC Description	Empower patients and family members in self-care management through oral health coaching
TSC Proficiency Level	Level 3
TSC Proficiency Description	Support empowerment of patients in oral health self-care management for routine cases in ILTC settings
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic health risk factors assessments • Cultural awareness • Psychosocial factors including stress and anxiety • Chronic illnesses management guidelines • Factors that determine the literacy level of oral health education materials or interventions • Patient education guidelines on oral health self-care management • Types of community resources and social support systems • Reflective listening skills • The antecedents, behaviours and consequences of behavioural change • Principles of oral health coaching
Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist patients in implementing oral health self-care management plans • Determine cultural influences on oral health teaching • Identify barriers to change including lack of motivation, skills, knowledge, or resources • Use appropriate education and training materials to teach patient techniques of managing own oral health conditions and treatment regimes • Determine patients' or caregivers' level of readiness in learning oral health self-care management techniques • Modify patient learning plans based on challenges and barriers identified • Use a variety of teaching methods in accordance with patients' preferred learning styles • Provide opportunities for teach-back sessions



TECHNICAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

● **TSC Category:** Patient and/or Client Education and Health Promotion **TSC:** Patient Empowerment on Oral Health Self-care

TSC Description	Empower patients and family members in self-care management through oral health coaching
TSC Proficiency Level	Level 4
TSC Proficiency Description	Advocate empowerment of patients in oral health self-care management for routine and complex cases
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex health risk factors assessments • Review of Transtheoretical/Health belief models and Social cognitive theory • Types of community resources and social support • Telehealth • Motivational interviewing techniques • Oral health self-care management frameworks and strategies • Barriers to self-management training and education • Principles of Adult Learning • Different modalities of learning resources including audio and written modalities • Therapeutic communication skills
Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess patients' individual perceptions of oral health problems • Perform assessments of patient self-management needs • Design activities to enable patients to make informed decisions about care and engage in healthy behaviours • Develop self-management care plans to empower patients to achieve self-regulation and self-management of treatment regimens associated with the oral conditions • Develop systems for the patients to monitor his or her own progress • Perform patient and caregiver education for complex cases • Review effectiveness of patient and caregiver training programmes • Mitigate key barriers to improve self-care management • Implement new or improved patient and caregiver education materials and methods of teaching • Supervise junior colleagues in providing patient and caregiver education



TECHNICAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

● TSC Category: Patient Care		TSC: Treatment Implementation in Oral Health Therapy
TSC Description	Provide support and execute a dental treatment plan	
TSC Proficiency Level	Level 3	
TSC Proficiency Description	Perform basic oral health therapy intervention tasks as prescribed by registered dentist independently and assigned tasks under the guidance of clinical supervisors	
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate, safe and effective use of a wider dental materials, instruments and equipment to perform more complex oral health therapy intervention tasks • Evidence-based practice and methods • Contributing factors that will affect client participation • Appropriate handling and/or positioning of clients for various intervention methods • Clinical incident management frameworks • Knowledge relevant to the expanded scope of practice 	
Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administer basic interventions independently • Perform expanded scope of practice under guidance • Demonstrate safe handling of clients and materials, instruments and equipment • Communicate clear and accurate instructions appropriate to the clients' level of understanding • Engage, motivate and counsel clients during the course of the interventions, as prescribed by registered dentist • Identify risk factors associated with the clients' conditions • Take prompt and appropriate actions in response to the clients' adverse reaction to interventions • Manage incidents during interventions according to organisational procedures • Support the implementation of inter-professional team interventions, where applicable 	



TECHNICAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

● TSC Category: Patient Care		TSC: Treatment Implementation in Oral Health Therapy
TSC Description	Provide support and execute a dental treatment plan	
TSC Proficiency Level	Level 4	
TSC Proficiency Description	Perform basic oral health therapy intervention tasks independently and a wider range of complex tasks as defined by the expanded OHT work scope	
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polypharmacy, multiple comorbidities and their effects on therapy interventions • Potential contra-indications from therapy interventions administered • Multi-disciplinary approaches to therapy planning • Factors that can influence patients' motivation to continue • Biopsychosocial approaches to enhance treatment effectiveness • Basic supervisory concepts • Knowledge relevant to the expanded scope of practice 	
Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform expanded scope of practice • Demonstrate appropriate prioritisations and patient review frequency • Collaborate with patients and/or caregivers to address needs for routine cases and seek guidance for complex cases • Escalate complex cases to clinical supervisors for guidance • Facilitate inter-professional interventions, where applicable • Assist juniors as appropriate to manage incidents during interventions according to organisational procedures 	



PROGRAM LISTING

- **Training programmes are under development.**

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