Domain I. Professionalism and Ethics

The contemporary dental hygienist provides clinical care using evidenced-based knowledge, professional judgment and skills. The dental hygienist is a licensed professional who must be capable of discerning and effectively managing ethical issues and problems in the workplace. The dental hygienist increases the knowledge base of the profession and therefore must be able to understand and apply rapidly changing, evidence-based information to a variety of roles in the employment environment. Therefore, critical thinking, problem-solving, and evidence-based decision-making are critical to possess.

1. Professionalism and Ethics

Professional behavior encompasses many components including a team approach, positive verbal and non-verbal communication, interpersonal skills, attention to feedback, protocol adherence thorough and complete documentation, and adherence to ethical principles. It is the professional responsibility of the dental hygienist to acquire, synthesize, use and evaluate information in a critical and scientific manner in order to provide ethical dental hygiene care based on accepted scientific theories and research as well as the accepted standard of care.

1. Professionalism and Ethics

Specifically the dental hygiene graduate must be able to:

1.1. Assume responsibility for dental hygiene actions and care based on accepted scientific theories and research as well as accepted standard of care.
1.2. Provide accurate, consistent, and complete documentation for assessment, dental hygiene diagnosis, planning, implementation, and evaluation of dental hygiene care.
1.3. Communicate professional knowledge orally and in writing (using principles of scientific writing with healthcare professionals and non-healthcare professionals.
1.4. Integrate the ADHA Code of Ethics in all professional endeavors.
1.5. Comply with all state and federal laws, recommendations and regulations governing the practice of dentistry and dental hygiene.
1.6. Apply principles of risk management to manage professional risks and prevent liability.
1.7. Serve all patients without discrimination, appreciating cultural diversity.
1.8. Critically analyze published reports of oral health research, oral health products and treatments and apply this information to the practice of dental hygiene. Evaluate the safety and efficacy of oral health products, interventions and treatments.

Domain II. Dental Hygiene Process of Care
The dental hygienist is a licensed preventive oral health professional who provides educational, preventive, and therapeutic services in the support of optimal oral health. The dental hygiene process of care applies principles from the biomedical, clinical, and psychosocial sciences to diverse populations that may include the medically compromised, mentally or physically challenged or socially or culturally disadvantaged.

2. Assessment
The dental hygiene graduate must be able to systematically collect, analyze and accurately record data on the general, oral and psychological health status of patients using methods consistent with medico-legal principles.

Specifically, the dental hygiene graduate must be able to:

2.1. Systematically collect, analyze and record data on the general, oral and psychosocial health status of the patient using methods consistent with medico-ethico-legal principles.
2.2. Assess patient concerns, goals, values and preferences to guide patient care.
2.3. Identify individual risk factors and develop strategies that promote health-related quality of life. Recognize pre-disposing and etiologic risk factors that require interventions to prevent disease.
2.4. Analyze health conditions and medications that impact overall patient/client care.
2.5. Perform a comprehensive examination using and interpreting the extra and intra oral examination, hard tissue examination, periodontal examination, radiographic examination and other data collection procedures to assess the patient needs.
2.6. Identify the patient/client at risk for a medical emergency and be prepared to help manage an emergency should it occur during an appointment.
2.7. Identify the need for radiographs and radiographically distinguish normal from abnormal findings.

3. Dental Hygiene Diagnosis and Treatment Planning
The dental hygiene graduate must be able to use critical decision-making skills to reach conclusions about the patient’s dental hygiene needs based on all available assessment data and collaborate with the patient and/or healthcare professional to formulate a comprehensive dental hygiene care plan that is patient-centered and based on current scientific literature.

Specifically, the dental hygiene graduate must be able to:

3.1. Use and interpret assessment findings, etiologic factors and clinical data in determining a dental hygiene diagnosis.
3.2. Obtain consultations as indicated.
3.3. Establish oral health goals with the patient/client, family, and/or guardians as an active participant.
3.4. Establish expected outcomes related to the needs and desires of the patient/client and the dental hygiene diagnosis.
3.5. Establish a planned sequence of care (educational, preventive and therapeutic) services based on the dental hygiene diagnosis, identified oral conditions, potential problems, etiologic and risk factors and available treatment modalities.
3.6. Make referrals to other healthcare professionals.
3.7. Obtain and document informed consent from the patient/client based on a thorough case presentation.

4. Implementation
The dental hygiene graduate must be able to provide treatment that includes preventive and therapeutic services designed to achieve and maintain oral health and assist the patient in achieving oral health goals.

Specifically, the dental hygiene graduate must be able to:

4.1. Negotiate with and motivate patients/clients to make a commitment to assume responsibility for their oral health and promote adherence to self-care regimens.
4.2. Perform dental hygiene interventions to eliminate and/or control etiologic factors to prevent and control dental caries and periodontal diseases.
4.3. Provide additional assessment data, including indices, diagnostic tests for caries and periodontal diseases and study models.
4.4. Control pain and anxiety during treatment through the use of accepted clinical and behavioral management.

5. Evaluation
The dental hygiene graduate must be able to evaluate the effectiveness of implemented preventive, clinical and educational services and modify as necessary.

Specifically, the dental hygiene graduate must be able to:

5.1. Evaluate the clinical outcomes of dental hygiene interventions using indices, instruments and examination techniques and feedback from the patient/client and others to improve patient/client health.
5.2. Evaluate the patient’s/ client’s satisfaction with the dental hygiene care received and the oral health status achieved.
5.3. Compare actual outcomes to expected outcomes, reevaluating goals, diagnoses and services when expected outcomes are not achieved; provide subsequent treatment and referrals based on evaluation findings.
5.4. Develop and maintain a recall/continuing care system/health maintenance program appropriate to the practice setting and individual patient/client needs.

Domain III. Health Promotion
Patients today are consumers of healthcare and desire and need information on oral health and disease. Health promotion strategies are involved in the full range of dental hygiene actions directed toward helping underserved and diverse populations achieve general health and more specifically oral health.

6. Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
The Community: The dental hygiene graduate must be able to initiate and assume responsibility for health promotion and disease prevention activities for underserved and diverse populations.

Specifically, the dental hygiene graduate must be able to:

6.1. Assess community oral health needs, risk and available resources and evaluate outcomes for health improvement and access to the healthcare system.
6.2. Plan, implement and evaluate community-based oral health programs.
6.3. Present educational information to diverse client populations, in a variety of settings using appropriate teaching strategies.
6.4. Evaluate reimbursement mechanisms and their impact on the patient/client access to oral health care.
6.5. Participate in the public policy/legislative process.
6.6. Provide screening, referral and education services that allow consumers to access the health care delivery system.
6.7. Understand the opportunities for improving oral health beyond his/her practice by providing oral health services and health promotion activities in a variety of community-based clinics.
6.8. Develop a perspective of the relationship of the dental hygiene profession to the U.S. health care system and global healthcare systems.
6.9. Promote the values of oral and general health and wellness to the public and organization within and outside the profession.
6.10. Identify population risk factors and develop strategies that promote health-related quality of life.

Domain IV. Professional Commitment & Development
The dental hygienist must make a commitment to professional development and lifelong learning. Knowledge of the scientific method ensures that actions taken by the dental hygienist are based on scientific evidence, and not merely tradition, intuition or personal preference. Complex issues of health policy, politics and professionalization require the dental hygienist to be critical thinkers in preparation for roles as leaders, organizers, and advocates.

7. Professional Commitment and Advancement
The dental hygiene graduate must be able to contribute to improving the knowledge, skills and values of the profession and pursue new knowledge on a continual basis due to a changing healthcare environment. Understanding leadership principles allows the dental hygienist to advance the goals of the profession both as an individual and via groups.

Specifically, the dental hygienist must be able to:

7.1. Assume the roles of the professional dental hygienist (clinician, educator, researcher, change agent, consumer advocate administrator as defined by the ADHA.
7.2. Assume responsibility for life long learning and professional growth.
7.3. Identify career goals, practice philosophy and direct personal career development.
7.4. Advance the values of the profession through leadership, service activities and affiliations with professional and public organizations.
7.5. Examine and understand professional issues that influence the practice of dental hygiene such as workforce needs, practice models, regulation, and the legislative process in order to advance the profession of dental hygiene.