

## **Guidelines on referrals by dental practitioners**

### **Background**

Referral between dentists and dental specialists is an integral part of the practise of dentistry. Rarely does any practitioner practise all parts of dentistry, and the dental professions include registrants in general dentistry, various dental specialties and dental auxiliary professions – dental therapy and dental hygiene. Referral between registrants in each of these groups is commonplace and desirable for optimal patient care.

The Board also decided as a result of an investigation that referral practices vary and there are times when informal referrals are not sufficient and that a written referral should be provided in the best interests of patients.

These Guidelines do not affect the supervision requirements of Code of Practice #1, Practice of Dentistry by dental therapists and dental hygienists which addresses the referral of patients being treated by dental auxiliaries.

### **Reference**

*Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act 1999 - Section 6, Objects of Act*

### **Principles**

1. Dental registrants should refer for consultation whenever the welfare of patients would be safeguarded or advanced by using those who have special skills, knowledge or facilities.
2. When referring to another practitioner, the referring practitioner should ensure that the:
  - patient understands the reason for the referral and any relevant information needed to attend the other practitioner.
  - reason for referral and any relevant information will be understood by the practitioner receiving the referral. The referring practitioner should provide a written referral if the reason for referral is not clear or there is other information essential to the treatment to be provided by the second practitioner and any significant medical history.
3. Upon completion of their care, a dental specialist or other dentist providing a service on referral shall return the patient to the referring dentist unless the patient expresses a different preference.

### **Approval Date**

1 February 2005

### **Next Review Date**

July 2010