



THE CANADIAN DENTAL
HYGIENISTS ASSOCIATION
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE
DES HYGIÉNISTES DENTAIRES

For immediate release (Offert en français sur demande)

Media Release

Historic Day for Oral Health of Canada's Most Vulnerable Populations

May 2, 2024 (Ottawa, ON) — It's a historic time in Canada for the oral health of the country's most vulnerable populations. Yesterday, on May 1, many independent dental hygienists began providing treatment for eligible seniors under the Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP). Over 1.7 million seniors are enrolled, and more age cohorts will become eligible as the program rolls out over the coming months.

The Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA) and its 22,000 members applaud the federal government for taking direct action to improve access to oral health care for those who need it most. The participation of large numbers of oral health professionals will be integral to the success of this plan “but independent dental hygienists will play a particularly critical role in providing the needed preventive oral health care services,” says CDHA President Francine Trudeau. Dental hygienists are instrumental in improving access to care for underserved populations, “delivering preventive and therapeutic services in dental hygiene clinics, long-term care facilities, in patients' homes, schools, and via mobile clinics,” adds Trudeau. Independent dental hygienists are also able to travel to northern, rural, and remote communities across Canada where access to dental and dental hygiene services is limited or nonexistent.

The plan is not perfect, but it's a good start. CDHA continues to advocate for improvements to coverage for preventive services, adding new services such as oral health education and health promotion strategies, care of oral appliances, and services that will have a direct impact on oral function/pain and quality of life, and increasing frequency limits for scaling and root planing. Our advocacy also includes addressing the disparity between the dental hygiene and dental reimbursement rates for the same service, and ensuring the plan is not an administrative burden for front office staff and does not rely heavily on preauthorization of dental services.

Reimbursement rates are a paramount concern as the CDCP-established fees for dental hygienists practising independently are, on average, 15% lower than the published fees for dental hygiene services provided by a dental hygienist working in a dental clinic. Health Minister Mark Holland has assured CDHA that fee parity will

be achieved in future iterations of the plan, but he has yet to establish a firm timeline for this important adjustment. The current reimbursement rates are discriminatory and anti-competitive and must be addressed as soon as possible.

CDHA and the provincial dental hygiene associations feel strongly that dental hygienists have a key role to play in providing essential oral health care under this plan. Sally Lloyd, RDH, BScDH, owner of Lifetime Smiles Dental Hygiene Clinic in Calgary, Alberta, states, “Committed to ensuring all Canadians have access to essential dental care, our team of dedicated hygienists has registered to extend our services to as many individuals as possible. We hear too often that even basic preventative dental healthcare is a luxury and not accessible to all.” Guylaine Souligny Theoret, RDH, of Moose Creek Dental Hygiene Clinic in Ontario adds, “Voici ma [première] patiente sur le programme dentaire. Super excitant! It went very smoothly! A great program for the general public who otherwise couldn’t afford to get their teeth cared for but let’s advocate for more units of scaling per year to benefit these clients who often need more preventative services.”

CDHA will continue to monitor further developments and actively engage with government and other stakeholders to enhance the CDCP.

About the Canadian Dental Hygienists Association (CDHA):

CDHA is the national voice of dental hygienists in Canada. Representing over 31,000 dental hygienists across the country, CDHA advocates for the advancement and promotion of the dental hygiene profession while maintaining a commitment to the public's oral health. Dental hygiene is the sixth largest regulated health profession in Canada with professionals working in a variety of settings, including [independent dental hygiene practice](#), with people of all ages, addressing issues related to oral health. For more information on oral health, visit [dentalhygienecanada.ca](#). For more information on the work of CDHA, visit [cdha.ca](#).

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