

Dental Hygiene Diagnosis

Position

It is the position of the American Dental Hygienists' Association (ADHA) that dental hygiene diagnosis is a necessary and intrinsic element of dental hygiene education and scope of practice.¹

The ADHA supports dental hygiene curricula that leads to competency in the dental hygiene process of care: assessment, dental hygiene diagnosis, planning, implementation, evaluation and documentation.²

Dental Hygiene Diagnosis:

The identification of an individual's health behaviors, attitudes, and oral health care needs for which a dental hygienist is educationally qualified and licensed to provide. The dental hygiene diagnosis requires evidence-based critical analysis and interpretation of assessments in order to reach conclusions about the patient's dental hygiene treatment needs. The dental hygiene diagnosis provides the basis for the dental hygiene care plan.³

Background

The Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) was established in 1975 and is nationally recognized by the United States Department of Education as the sole agency to accredit dental and dental-related education programs conducted at the post-secondary level. CODA's mission is to serve the oral health care needs of the public through the development and administration of standards that foster continuous quality improvement of dental and dental related educational programs.

As a result of a resolution brought forth by the American Dental Association House of Delegates in 2007, on January 1, 2010 the CODA removed "dental hygiene treatment plan" and "dental hygiene diagnosis" from the CODA education accreditation standards for dental hygiene. These terms had been a part of the standards since 1998.

Dental Hygiene Diagnosis in State Laws

In 2004 and 2009 respectively, **Oregon** and **Colorado** became the first states to specifically authorize the dental hygiene diagnosis as part of the dental hygienists' scope of practice. Oregon state statute specifically includes diagnosis within the definition of dental hygiene. Oregon state statute permits dental hygienists to "diagnose, treatment plan and provide dental hygiene services." Under Colorado state statute, "dental hygiene diagnosis" means the identification of an existing oral health problem that a dental hygienist is qualified and licensed to treat within the scope of dental hygiene practice.

Dental Hygiene

The American Dental Hygienists' Association (ADHA) represents the professional interests of dental hygienists in the United States. Dental hygiene is the science and practice of recognition, prevention and treatment of oral diseases and conditions as an integral component of total health. This includes assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation, evaluation and documentation and is the profession of dental hygienists.⁴ A dental hygienist is a primary care oral health professional who has graduated from an accredited dental hygiene program in an institution of higher education, licensed in dental hygiene to provide education, assessment, research, administrative, diagnostic, preventive and therapeutic services that support overall health through the promotion of optimal oral health.⁵

1. *ADHA Policy Manual* [6-09]. Chicago, Ill. American Dental Hygienists' Association. http://www.adha.org/resources-docs/7614_Policy_Manual.pdf

2. *ADHA Policy Manual* [16-15/16-93]. Chicago, Ill. American Dental Hygienists' Association. http://www.adha.org/resources-docs/7614_Policy_Manual.pdf

3. *ADHA Policy Manual* [1-14/SCDHP/18-96]. Chicago, Ill. American Dental Hygienists' Association. http://www.adha.org/resources-docs/7614_Policy_Manual.pdf

4. *ADHA Policy Manual* [3-14/14-83]. Chicago, Ill. American Dental Hygienists' Association. http://www.adha.org/resources-docs/7614_Policy_Manual.pdf

5. *ADHA Policy Manual* [4-14/19-84]. Chicago, Ill. American Dental Hygienists' Association. http://www.adha.org/resources-docs/7614_Policy_Manual.pdf