

The Office Consult

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EACH YEAR, THE PHYSICIAN ADVISORY SERVICE RECEIVES APPROXIMATELY 5,000 CALLS FROM PHYSICIANS ON A WIDE VARIETY OF MATTERS. THE ISSUES RAISED ARE OFTEN OF A CLINICAL, ETHICAL OR LEGAL NATURE. THIS COLUMN FEATURES QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS TO ISSUES THAT WE EITHER HEAR ABOUT FREQUENTLY, OR THAT HAVE A WIDE APPLICABILITY ACROSS THE PROFESSION. BASED ON YOUR INQUIRIES AND CALLS TO THE PHYSICIAN ADVISORY SERVICE, WE WILL PUBLISH THE ANSWERS TO THE MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS.

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Delegating administration of anesthesia for teeth scaling to dental hygienists

The College was contacted by a dental hygienist who was seeking information with respect to physicians' ability to delegate controlled acts. The dental hygienist intended to seek delegation from a physician to administer local anesthesia for the purpose of teeth scaling.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons has a policy on the delegation of controlled acts. The overriding principle of the policy is that delegation must occur in the context of an established physician-patient relationship. In all instances where a controlled act is delegated, the act remains the responsibility of the physician who authorized it.

In most cases, delegation will only occur after the physician has interviewed the patient, performed an assessment, made recommendations, obtained informed consent to proceed, and instituted a course of therapy.

Additionally, physicians may only delegate those acts that form part of their regular practice and daily competencies. If dental anesthesia does not form part of a physician's regular scope of practice, it would be inappropriate for a physician to delegate this controlled act to another individual.

There are other principles of delegation that physicians must take into account. It is incumbent upon the

physician to ensure that the individual receiving the delegation has the appropriate knowledge, skill and judgment to perform the delegated act. Furthermore, the physician assumes responsibility for any delegated act, and must therefore ensure proper supervision of the delegation. When delegating controlled acts, physicians must also consider any required intervention should the patient experience an adverse event.

The College's Delegation of Controlled Acts policy can be found at www.cpso.on.ca/Policies/delegation.htm. 

Practical Guide for Safe and Effective Office-based Practices

The College has produced a booklet to help physicians with office-based practices keep their practices as safe as possible for

patients, staff and themselves.

The "Practical Guide for Safe and Effective Office-based Practices" reflects both the collective experience of the College and the current literature in office facility manage-

ment. The guide addresses such matters as appropriate signage, infection control, vaccine storage, and patient privacy.

The booklet is available on the College's website www.cpso.on.ca under Publications.

