	Title: Position Statement 12: Use of Relative Analgesia	
	Version: PS12.16.0	Date Approved/Last Reviewed: February 2016
	Approved by: Executive Council	Next Review: February 2017

USE OF RELATIVE ANALGESIA

MEDIA RELEASE

Dental treatment may require the use of adjuncts to local anaesthesia such as relative analgesia with the use of inhaled nitrous oxide. There is much discussion about whether dental and oral health therapists can perform dental procedures on patients when a dentist has administered the nitrous oxide. Dental practitioners are required to understand and practice within their individual and professions' scope of practice.


FURTHER INFORMATION

Registered dental and oral health therapists are permitted to perform oral health procedures within their scope of practice 1. A 'Scope of Practice' is defined by the Dental Board of Australia as a range of dental procedures and treatment the practitioner has been formally educated and trained in, and is deemed competent. Dental practitioners registered under the same category may have variations in their scope of practice due to their under-graduate education, current practice and post-graduate programs undertaken to extend their scope. In order to maintain registration standards, dental practitioners are required to understand and practice within their individual and professions' scope of practice 2.

Dental treatment may require the use of adjuncts to local anaesthesia such as relative analgesia and conscious sedation. Relative analgesia with the use of inhaled nitrous oxide renders a chemically induced altered psychological state 3 without reaching a state of conscious sedation 4. Conscious sedation may be achieved by inhalation, ingestion or injection and is defined as a drug induced depression of consciousness with the ability to respond to verbal commands or light tactile stimulation 4.

The Dental Board of Australia provides administration regulations for relative analgesia and conscious sedation based on professions' scope of practice. Dental and oral health therapists "...do not have the prescribing authority required under state and territory drugs and poisons legislation..." to administer nitrous oxide 5. The Dental Board of Australia clearly states that endorsed registered dentists or dental specialist are permitted to administer conscious sedation. The conscious sedation endorsement is not offered to dental and oral health therapists 4.

There is much discussion about whether dental and oral health therapists can perform dental procedures on patients when a dentist has administered the nitrous oxide. The following quote has been taken directly from the Dental Board of Australia to reduce interpretation bias.

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“The dentist is the practitioner with the prescribing authority to administer the nitrous oxide. He/she is therefore accountable for the effects of the scheduled medicine on the patient. The Board does not provide specific advice on how workplaces structure the delivery of the dental services, however the dentist would need to assure himself/herself that she/he can maintain this accountability at all times regardless of who is providing the dental treatment.”⁵

The Australian Dental and Oral Health Therapists’ Association Inc. (ADOHTA Inc.) and its branches do not endorse dental and oral health therapists who practice outside their individual or professional scope of practice. Dental and oral health therapists are encouraged to seek advice from their professional association and private indemnity insurer regarding any questions about the provision of dental treatment. ADOHTA is available for consultation and advice regarding professional structured relationships within dental teams that include dental and oral health therapists.

References

1. The Dental Board of Australia. Meeting of the Dental Board of Australia - 25 March 2015 [2016/01/21]. Available from: <http://www.dentalboard.gov.au/News/Communiques.aspx>.
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3. Houpt MI, Limb R, Livingston RL. Clinical Effects of Nitrous Oxide Conscious Sedation in Children. *Pediatric Dentistry*. 2004;26(1):29-36.
4. The Dental Board of Australia. Endorsement for Conscious Sedation Registration Standard 2016 [2016/01/21]. Available from: <http://www.dentalboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards.aspx>.
5. The Dental Board of Australia. Registration - Conscious Sedation 2016 [2016/01/21]. Available from: <http://www.dentalboard.gov.au/Registration/Conscious-Sedation/FAQ-on-Conscious-Sedation.aspx>.