Sharpen your skills
Dr Dominique Kanaan and Dr Zaki Kanaan shed light on the new rules, which allow hygienists and therapists to carry out whitening

D enty in the UK is changing and the profession is in a very dynamic phase. These changes are affecting the entire dental team and in particular dental care professionals (DCPs). The skill set of DCPs is increasing and they are now able to become practice owners. A few years ago this would not even have been a viable option.

The easing of the rules by the General Dental Council now also allows whitening to be part of the armamentarium of hygienists and therapists, as long as they have a prescription from a dentist. But what constitutes a prescription? Although there is no set format for the wording of a whitening prescription as such, according to Dental Protection, a prescription should contain enough information for the DCP to understand precisely what treatment is being proposed and allow them to satisfy themselves that the treatment is in the patients' best interest. Broadly, this should include:

2. The cause of the discoloration.
3. What warnings have been given or any specific guidance on what is clear though, is that having undertaken whitening treatments. Although the GDC has not offered any specific guidance on this, it is highly recommended that a DCP should attend a recognised training course before undertaking training to carry out whitening. As long as they have undergone appropriate training. There is no additional fee for this cover from both organisations. The DCP state that you should inform them in writing if you are undertaking whitening procedures and indemnity will be provided on a case-by-case basis, depending on the level of training received. DPS does not need written confirmation that a member is carrying out whitening but they emphasise that you will need to demonstrate that you have an appropriate level of training, in the event a complaint is made.

Although ultimate responsibility lies with the dentist, as they will be writing the prescription, the DCP carrying out that prescription also has to demonstrate a duty of care and must therefore satisfy themselves that the treatment being undertaken is appropriate and is in patients' best interest, when balanced against other treatments that may be possible (including no treatment at all).

Dental hygienists and therapists are now registered professionals. With that status comes professional responsibility... to the patient, other team members and of course... themselves. Along with this comes the duty of keeping yourself up to date with relevant courses for new skills such as whitening.

Value for money
In the current climate of doom and gloom, people are more discerning with what and who they spend their hard earned cash with. It is quite likely that people will shun more expensive cosmetic treatment options, such as veneers, and opt for the simpler and more reasonable options of whitening for any improvement they can get for the money.

As a profession need to take note of this and what better way than embracing the new skills that our hygienists and therapists have been empowered to do and encourage them to take a hands-on whitening course. Not only will it add a new skill to their bow but it will also give them a shot of enthusiasm. The side effect is that it will free up the dentists time, allowing them to focus on the art of dentistry and running the business.

Dr Zaki and Dr Dominique Kanaan set up K2Dental Seminars.com specifically to help train hygienists and therapists in the art and science of power and home whitening. Their course is one of the few hands-on courses available and is carried out in small groups. Team up with BAGD, Dr Zaki and Dr Dominique Kanaan will be at the sixth annual conference, 'The Future of Dentistry' at the EICC in Edinburgh from 19–21 November 2009, where their next White Talks course take place. Bookings can be made on line at: www.bacd.com.

The authors would like to acknowledge that this article is written with information provided from both the General Dental Council and the Dental Protection Society's position statements on tooth whitening.

About the author
Dr Zaki Kanaan qualified from Guy's Hospital in 1996. His main interests lie in all aspects of cosmetic dentistry, with a special interest in dental implantology and orthodontics. He has earned cash with. He strongly believes in Continuing Professional Development and lectures on all aspects of implant and cosmetic dentistry. He sits on the Board of Directors of the British Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry as Chairman of the Study Club Committee and is a member of the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry. He is also an editor for Dental Implant Summaries, and is a member of the Association of Dental Implantology in the UK. He has embarked upon a career pathway leading to him gaining a diploma in sedation, a diploma in hypnosis, and most recently he has become a Lecturist of the Faculty of Homeopathy.

Dr Dominique Kanaan, shortly after qualifying from Guy’s Hospital in 1996, achieved a diploma in hypnosis and most recently she has become a Lecturist of the Faculty of Homeopathy. She enjoys all aspects of dentistry, but has focused her interests in the field of cosmetic dentistry, and is well known in the cosmetic dental arena. Dominique attends cosmetic courses both nationally and internationally and is a member of both the British and American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry. She currently works exclusively in private practice in London and was one of the main clinicians in Dentists’ flagship cosmetic studio in Selfridges, carrying out up to 10 whitening procedures per day.

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