

18 October 2018

Consumer Protection in Dental Services

The public policy on a consumer protection in dental services aims at enabling everyone to have good dental and oral health, receive equitable essential dental service benefits, have access to dental services at reasonable prices, and be protected from unsafe dental and oral health care products and services, with agencies in the public sector, the private sector, civil society, and the academic sector participating in policy implementation.

The Eleventh National Health Assembly,

Having considered the report on “Consumer Protection in Dental Services”¹,

Recognizing that the 20-year strategies of the Ministry of Public Health aim at revising benefit packages in order to reduce the disparity among the major three health security schemes, by stating that benefits with notable disparity are dental service benefits;

Concerned that people in the Universal Health Coverage Scheme, the Social Security Scheme, the Civil Servant Medical Benefit Scheme, and those not entitled to any welfare benefits cannot access the same essential dental services, and that Thai society still has the problem of inefficient enforcement of dental service consumer protection laws;

Worried that making dentures for the people and using fashionable orthodontic devices to imitate orthodontic treatments by those who do not have accurate dental knowledge, and advertising or selling devices/equipment/dental materials for people to make fashionable braces themselves, are harmful, posing risks of oral infection and chronic oral ulcers;

Appreciating that the Dental Council, the Office of the Consumer Protection Board (OCPB), the Consumer Protection Police Division, the Consumer Health Protection and Public Health Pharmaceutical Group, and Provincial Public Health Offices have coordinated their collaborative efforts to take action against those committing an offence of providing illegal dental services;

Realizing the necessity to develop a dental service access system within a public–private partnership that determines disbursement amounts for services and does not require advance payment from service users;

Considering that as consumers, the public must be given quality dental services that are of acceptable standards and safe, and have equal and fair access to dental services, including access to accurate and appropriate information on oral health;

Has passed the following resolutions:

1. Requesting the National Health Security Office (NHSO), together with the Social Security Office, the Comptroller General’s Department, Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Public Health, the Dental Council, and other agencies involved to jointly define essential dental

¹ NHA 11/Main 4

benefit packages that are equitable with respect to support, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation, by announcing the requirements thereto within one year following the adoption of the resolution, to set official reference prices to be paid to service providers the announcement of which shall be made within one year after the adoption of this resolution, and to perform the duty of extensively raising public awareness of their rights to dental services through public communications.

2. Requesting the Ministry of Public Health via the Department of Health and the Office of the Permanent Secretary for Public Health, together with the NHSO, the Social Security Office, the Comptroller General's Department, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education, local administrative organizations, Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, other agencies concerned, and the civil society to set up an efficient and participatory system for oral health promotion, prevention, and care to all age groups since a stage of fetus, and include people with disabilities and socially disadvantaged groups, with adequate resources and personnel, and to consider making this an important indicator of the Ministry of Public Health and other agencies involved.

3. Requesting the Office of the Permanent Secretary of Public Health, the NHSO, the Social Security Office, the Comptroller General's Department, Ministry of Finance, and private dental service facilities nationwide to develop a dental service access system of the public owned service facilities and a public-private partnership service facilities. A dental service access system should determine disbursement amounts for the services and does not require advance payment from service users, including advance appointments, as well as jointly undertaking the procurement of expensive dental equipment.

4. Requesting the Department of Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce, together with the Ministry of Public Health, the NHSO, the Dental Council, consumer protection organizations and dental service providers to consider and announce appropriate and fair dental service fees.

5. Requesting the Food and Drug Administration to:

5.1 Issue a notification stipulating that dental devices and equipment for fashionable orthodontic service and illegal dentures are medical appliances that their manufacturers, sellers, and importers are required to register with the Food and Drug Administration and that they are under control and required to be sold only to dental service facilities of dental professionals or licensed medical appliance vendors.

5.2 Arrange for registration of dental laboratories in order to control production of devices or equipment and to define the qualifications of dental technicians working in dental laboratories.

5.3 Together with the Dental Council to promote dentists to use services from the dental laboratories registered with the Food and Drug Administration.

5.4 Jointly with the Thai Dental Technician Association, to encourage members of the Association and private dental laboratories those are not yet registered with the Food and Drug Administration to do so,

5.5 Jointly with the Health Consumer Protection Program, Chulalongkorn University (HCPC), the Foundation for Consumers (FFC), and the Consumer Health Protection and Public Health Pharmaceutical Group, Provincial Public Health Offices, to develop mechanisms for prevention, monitoring and model development to manage problems of fashionable orthodontic service and illegal dentures and implement them in an extensive manner;

6. Requesting the Office of the Consumer Protection Board (OCPB), the Department of Health Service Support, the Food and Drug Administration, Provincial Public Health Offices, and the Consumer Protection Police Division (CCPD) to take legal action against providers of

fashionable orthodontic services and illegal dentures for all offence categories and all acts under every relevant law, and to take action according to the Criminal Code if the offences are repeated, as well as to issue warnings to consumers in affected areas.

7. Requesting the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, the Office of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC), and the Technology Crime Suppress Division (TCSD) to increase monitoring and control measures and effective law enforcement, and to develop a system to prevent repeated offences regarding selling and advertising of dental devices or equipment as well as to issue warnings of possible harm via online and mainstream media;

8. Requesting local communities for the development of quality of life (district and regional), local administrative organizations, together with consumer protection networks, provincial health assembly networks, healthcare volunteers, children and youth councils, and other networks in the community, including dental personnel, to promote oral health care, educate the public on safe dental services, monitor, provide whistle blowing, and address the problems of fashionable orthodontic treatments and illegal dentures in their respective areas;

9. Requesting the Ministry of Education, local administrative organizations, together with the Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health, and the Dental Council, other agencies concerned, and the civil society to keep the public well informed of dental and oral health care and develop proper values concerning fashionable orthodontics;

10. Requesting the Ministry of Public Health, National Health Workforce Committee, schools of dentistry, and the Dental Council to collaboratively organize learning programs and training to create family dentists, family dental nurses, and dental workers in the community, setting an appropriate and fair ratio and distribution of dental workforce to support a proactive service approach, especially for people with disabilities and socially disadvantaged groups of all types.

11. Requesting the Ministry of Education, schools of dentistry, the Department of Skill Development, Ministry of Labor, and educational institutions to collaboratively organize learning courses, develop and evaluate the competency of dental technicians.

12. Requesting the Health Systems Research Institute and the Ministry of Finance to conduct a feasibility study/research on the establishment of a Dental Fund to develop an oral health service system and provide initial assistance to damaged parties as a result of services received in all schemes, and to review the rates of dental services to be appropriate and fair, as well as to increase law enforcement efficiency in dental service consumer protection;

13. Requesting the NHSO, the Ministry of Public Health, local administrative organizations and the people sector to jointly set policies to support primary healthcare units that provide dental service and encourage people to use basic dental services provided by such primary healthcare units, develop an appropriate referral system, and organize a service system in their respective areas;

14. Requesting the Secretary-General of the National Health Commission to report the progress to the 13th National Health Assembly.