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SADA Professional Advisory Bulletin

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Circulation date: 30 July 2026

Have you registered?

Bring a colleague - the more the merrier!



Dear Members

CLINICAL

SADA needs your input: dental assistant workforce survey

Practices across the country are struggling to recruit and retain registered dental assistants. Members report long-standing vacancies, appointments pushed back or cancelled, and existing staff carrying a heavier load as a result. SADA hears this regularly in conversation with members, but we require the data needed to further support that engagement.

This survey is intended to close that gap – we are requesting members to share what staffing shortages actually look like in their practices: how many positions sit vacant, how patient care is affected, what recruitment has cost you, and how far you are from the nearest training institution. This data will form the evidence base for SADA's discussions

with the HPCSA Professional Board and with training institutions about expanding training capacity and easing the shortage.

The survey has five short sections and takes about 8–10 minutes to complete. Your individual responses are confidential and will only be reported in aggregate. The more practices that respond, the stronger the position SADA will be in to advocate on your behalf, so if you have felt the impact of this shortage, please take a few minutes to tell us about it.

[Survey link](#)

Massmart tariff exclusions

Effective 1 July 2026, the Massmart Health Plan – Essential Option no longer reimburses three- and four-surface amalgam and resin fillings (codes 8343, 8344, 8353, 8354, 8369, 8370). This exclusion has been applied to the Massmart truCARE Option since 1 January 2025. Both are network options, meaning dentists who sign on as network providers commit to the Scheme's tariff and benefit terms, including exclusions like this one, without separate negotiation per case. Dentists who are not part of the network are not bound by these terms and retain more control over which procedures they can charge for and at what rate. While SADA has written to the scheme to convey our concerns regarding these changes, it is vital that members weigh the patient volume a network agreement may bring against the loss of control over tariff and benefit decisions made unilaterally by the Scheme.

New version of SADA Dental Codes available

Members are to note that the July 2026 version of the SADA Dental Procedure Codes and Guidelines 2026 has been uploaded to the SADA website for free download by members. It may be accessed by logging in to the site (www.sada.co.za) and thereafter clicking on "Publications and Press" --> "SADA Dental Codes and Guidelines".

LEGAL

Practising Dentistry Without Valid HPCSA Registration and the Appointment of Unregistered Practitioners

The South African Dental Association (SADA) reminds members who are appointing or engaging a dentist or other dental practitioner in their practice of the importance of verifying the practitioner's registration with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) before permitting that individual to provide clinical services.

Verification of HPCSA registration is an essential component of the recruitment and appointment process. Ensuring that every practitioner is lawfully entitled to practise protects patients, upholds professional standards, and reduces legal and regulatory risk for both the practitioner and the practice owner.

Registration with the HPCSA

In terms of **section 17 of the Health Professions Act 56 of 1974**, no person may practise any health profession for which registration is required unless that person is registered in terms of the Act. Dentists may therefore only render dental services while holding valid and current registration with the HPCSA.

A practitioner whose registration has lapsed due to non-payment of annual fees, has been suspended, or who has otherwise ceased to be registered, is not legally entitled to practise dentistry, regardless of previous qualifications, experience, or prior registration.

Consequences of Practising Without Registration

Practising dentistry without valid HPCSA registration may constitute an offence under the **Health Professions Act 56 of 1974** and may result in serious consequences, including:

- criminal liability in terms of the Act;
- disciplinary proceedings by the HPCSA;
- civil liability arising from patient harm;
- potential limitations or disputes regarding professional indemnity cover; and
- significant professional and reputational consequences.

Responsibilities of Practice Owners

Practice owners, principal dentists and employers should ensure that every dentist or dental practitioner engaged by the practice is appropriately registered with the HPCSA before commencing any clinical duties.

Verification of registration should form part of every recruitment and onboarding process and should be completed before the practitioner is permitted to examine, diagnose or treat patients.

Although each practitioner bears personal responsibility for maintaining valid registration, permitting an unregistered individual to practise within a dental practice may expose the practice owner to regulatory investigation, allegations of unprofessional conduct, civil liability, and reputational harm.

Vicarious Liability and Practice Owner Risk

In addition to the regulatory consequences described above, practice owners should be aware of the potential civil liability that may arise where an unregistered practitioner is permitted to provide treatment.

As a general principle of South African law, an employer may be held **vicariously liable** for the negligent acts or omissions of an employee committed in the course and scope of their employment. Accordingly, if an unregistered dentist causes harm to a patient while providing treatment within a dental practice, a patient may institute a claim against both the individual practitioner and the practice owner.

Furthermore, a practice owner who fails to verify a practitioner's current HPCSA registration before allowing that practitioner to treat patients may face allegations that the practice itself acted negligently by permitting an individual who was not legally entitled to practise to provide clinical care. A lack of knowledge that a practitioner's annual registration had lapsed is unlikely, on its own, to constitute an adequate defence where reasonable verification procedures were not implemented or maintained.

For this reason, principal dentists should regard verification of HPCSA registration as an ongoing due diligence obligation rather than a once-off administrative exercise. Registration should be confirmed before appointment and periodically thereafter, particularly following the annual renewal period, with documentary proof of each verification retained on the practitioner's personnel file.

Recommended Due Diligence

SADA recommends that members who appoint additional practitioners:

- Verify the practitioner's current HPCSA registration before employment or engagement;
- retain evidence of the verification on the practitioner's personnel file;
- verify annually that the practitioner's registration has been renewed and remains in good standing;

- ensure that the practitioner is registered in the correct professional category and practises only within the authorised scope of that registration; and
- immediately address any concerns regarding a practitioner's registration status before permitting further clinical practice.

Conclusion

Registration with the HPCSA is not merely an administrative requirement; it is a statutory prerequisite for practising dentistry in South Africa. Compliance with the **Health Professions Act 56 of 1974** protects patients, supports professional accountability, and safeguards both practitioners and practice owners.

Members are encouraged to undertake appropriate due diligence whenever appointing a dental practitioner and to seek guidance from the HPCSA or obtain independent legal advice where there is any uncertainty regarding a practitioner's registration status or entitlement to practise.

PLEASE PARTICIPATE IN THESE IMPORTANT PROFESSIONAL SURVEYS

Please participate in this RESEARCH SURVEY:

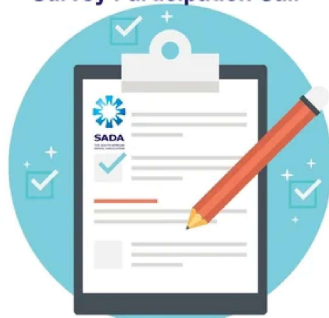
Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of Radiation Safety by private practice dentists based in Johannesburg, South Africa

To assess the knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) of private practice dental practitioners in Johannesburg regarding radiation safety and the use of ionising radiation in dental radiography. The study also aims to estimate potential cumulative exposure levels using a Job Exposure Matrix (JEM) developed from self reported radiographic workload, equipment and work practices. By identifying gaps in knowledge, adherence and potential risks this will support improved surveillance, strengthen compliance and inform future education, policy and occupational health initiatives. Findings may assist professional and regulatory bodies in enhancing radiation safety standards and promoting best practice for dental professionals and patients. Private practice dentists working in Johannesburg, South Africa

[Link to participate](#)

SADA Surveys

Survey Participation Call



SADA Community Service Dentist
Survey 2026

Survey Participation Call



SADA/DENTASA
Managed Care Discontent Survey
Survey 2026

Survey Participation Call



SADA Dental Assistant Workforce
Survey 2026

Yours in oral health

Dr Tinesha Parbhoo - Head Support Services**Mrs Carla Güldenpfennig - Legal & Corporate Governance Advisor****UPCOMING EVENTS**21
Aug**2026 SADA Dental & Oral Health Congress and Exhibition**22
Aug**SADA AWARDS & GRADUAND GALA DINNER 22 August 2026**

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