

What supports (or inhibits) the use of Dental Therapists in dentistry?



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Background & Aim

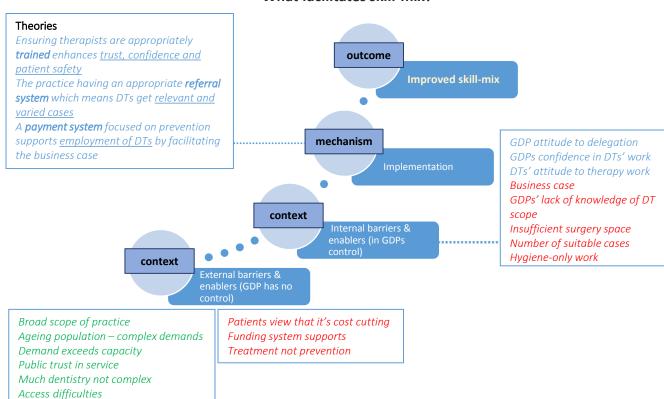
Studies across the health service reveal benefits of developing skill-mix. (1,2) We have yet to establish how to optimise the skills of the dental therapist (DT) within the dental team to achieve best service delivery.

Adopting a realist approach, (3) in this study funded by Health and Care Research Wales we used research literature on dental therapists to build theory about what works, why, for whom and in what circumstance.

Method

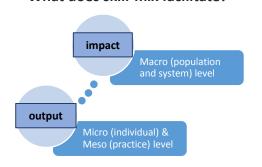
We derived our theory from a structured review of the literature. Following the realist approach, 79 papers were double coded (by at least two team members) for high-level factors (enablers, inhibitors, both) describing the conditions or context (C) under which the mechanisms (M) operate to produce desired outcomes (O).

What facilitates skill-mix?



What does skill-mix facilitate?

Improved job satisfaction Satisfied patients Enhanced cost efficiency Enhanced productivity Enhanced patient safety Patient safety compromised Additional patient visits needed



System efficiency savings Improved patient access Oral health improvements Erosion of professional identity

Conclusion

Our analysis provides theory about the context and mechanisms needed to facilitate the work of dental therapists and about what outcomes dental therapists facilitate. CMO theories are currently being tested in a set of dental practices.

References

Policy impetus

- ¹ General Dental Council. Principles of dental team working. London: General Dental Council, 2009.
- ² Dyer TA et al. What matters to patients when their care is delegated to dental therapists? BDJ 2013; 214: E17
- ³ Pawson R, Tilley N. *Realistic Evaluation*. London: Sage 1997. Contact: Alison Bullock, <u>BullockAD@Cardiff.ac.uk</u>