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Background & Aim

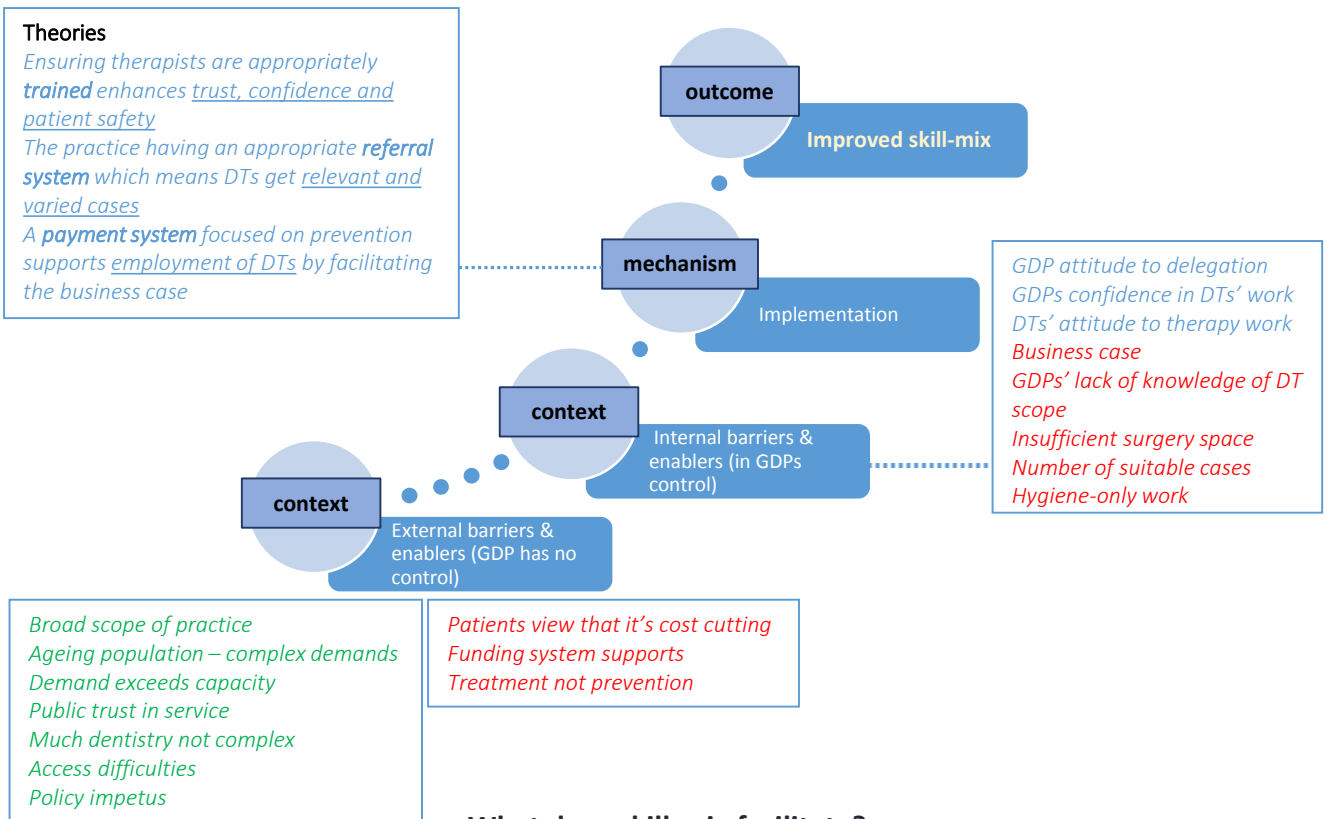
Studies across the health service reveal benefits of developing skill-mix.^(1,2) We have yet to establish how to optimise the skills of the dental therapist (DT) within the dental team to achieve best service delivery.

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.

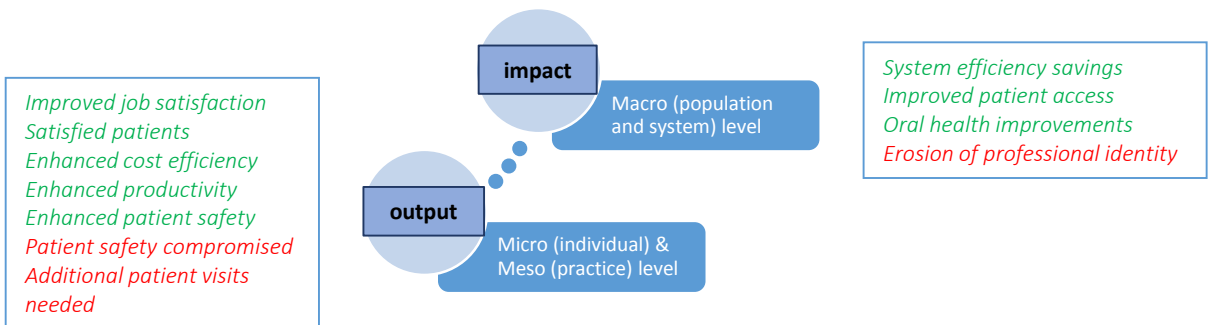
Method

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?



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

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.