Dental Hygiene

Physical Requirements

Review the following standards to examine your ability and compatibility with the physical activity and demands, professional and clinical condition requirements of dental hygienists. Sample tasks and skills are listed below with normal time frames.

Occasionally Dental Hygienists must be able to:

- Crouch To operate equipment and stock supplies
- Perform repetitive motions To enter computer data
- Grasp To manually debride teeth
- Pull To hold instruments
- Pull To move equipment or supplies that can weigh as much as 50 pounds

Frequently Dental Hygienists must be able to:

- Push To move portable equipment with 20 pounds of force to in the clinic
- Pull To move portable equipment with 20 pounds of force to in the clinic
- Lift To move boxes of supplies in the dental clinic; move textbooks and heavy book bags/backpacks
- Use Fingers To enter computer data and use dental instruments
- Carry To carry supplies and books that can weigh as much as 25 pounds

Constantly Dental Hygienists must be able to:

- Stoop To assist patients in and out of wheelchairs
- Reach To manipulate standard or portable equipment [dental x-ray units]
- Stand While observing demonstrations
- Walk To transport instruments and supplies, and assist patients into the clinic. Walk to other areas of the department and campus as needed
- Feel To perceive attributes of patients and objects such as when performing intraoral and extraoral examinations; to use assessment instruments such as explorers and probes; to detect hard deposits on teeth; to evaluate deposit removal; to use restorative instruments

Communication Requirements

Dental Hygienists must be able to:

- Talk To speak clearly and concisely with patients, co-workers, and dentists and physicians in English when applicable using standard medical terminology
- Hear To perceive the nature of sounds at normal range; includes the ability to receive detailed information through oral communication, and to make fine discriminations in sound, such as when taking blood pressure
- Read To read and interpret directions from one's supervisor
- Write To prepare written documentation in appropriate English formats using standard medical/dental terminology

Physical Demand Requirements

Dental Hygienists must be able to:

- Heavy clinical assignments Hygienists must be able to work seated for several hours at a time to provide clinical services to patients. Risks include: carpal tunnel syndrome, thoracic outlet syndrome, neck pain, back pain, muscle fatigue
Visual Acuity Requirements

- Dental hygienists are required to use computer terminals and set the proper exposure techniques on the X-ray equipment
- Clinical assignments require visual assessment and evaluation of radiographs
- Clinical assignments require visual assessment of oral tissues and reading assessment instruments, i.e. periodontal probes
- Clinical assignments require working with printed and/or written documentation
- Dental hygienists must assess patient's condition, i.e., color, respiration, motion, etc

Professional Duty Requirements

Dental hygienists must be able to:

- Maintain a high standard of courtesy, ethics and cooperation in dealing with a diverse group of co-workers, patients, and visitors
- Provide quality performance despite the stress of the clinical work environment
- Think critically and perform duties during emergency situations
- Follow protocols for a wide variety of procedures and duties
- Maintain patient confidentiality

Clinical Conditions

- Dental hygienists are subject to electrical, radiant energy, and processor chemistry hazards
- Dental hygienists are exposed to restorative materials that may pose certain health risks
- Dental hygienists have been identified as having the likelihood of occupational exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials and, therefore, are included in the OSHA Exposure Control Plan with its specifications to prevent contact with the above materials

Warnings and Notifications of Hazards and Risks

All occupations have inherent risks that prospective students should be aware of. The purpose of this Warning of Hazards and Risks is to bring students' attention to the existence of potential dangers in the Dental Hygiene Program and to aid them in making an informed decision concerning participation in the Program, and in signing the Informed Acknowledgement of and Consent to Hazards Risks Form.

Occupational hazards for the field of radiology include, but are not limited to:

- Exposure to infectious disease which may lead to side effects or death
- Exposure to hazardous chemicals or substances
- Accidental injury in the clinical setting or enroute to or from a clinical site
- Injury or illness that can affect one's personal health or the health of an unborn child

An injury or illness can impair one's general physical and/or mental health and may hinder one's future ability to earn a living; engage in business, social, or recreational activities; or generally impair one's ability to enjoy life. There may also be risk of injury, illness, or death resulting from causes not specified in the Warning and Notification of Hazards and Risks.

In addition to acknowledging hazards and risks, the applicant must take responsibility regarding matters of safety involving self and others. After receiving instruction, students will be expected to demonstrate safety practices designed for radiology and all clinical procedures. Students must inform appropriate faculty or any relevant personal medical condition that might be hazardous or risky to self or others. A student may be required to submit permission from his/her personal physician to participate in dental hygiene education activities.

Upon entering the Dental Hygiene Program, the student will be required to sign an Informed Acknowledgment of Consent to Hazards and Risks form.