

# A fairer practice for HK dentists

By JACQUELINE LEE

IN a move that will end discrimination against dentists trained in non-Commonwealth countries, all dentists – regardless of where they were trained – will have to take an examination before they can practise in Hongkong.

The new arrangement, which has been endorsed by the Dental Council, will affect those who seek registration after April 1990.

At present, dentists trained in Hongkong, Commonwealth countries, the United States and Canada do not have to take a licensing examination administered by the Dental Council – while the exam is required of dentists trained elsewhere.

Commenting on the new policy, the Kowloon Walled City Neighbours Welfare Advancing Committee vice-chairman, Mr Chan Hip-ping, said it would help produce a fairer system.

However, he did not expect the policy to resolve difficulties faced by practitioners in the district, which is well known for a large, illegal dental business in which practitioners picked up their skills through apprenticeships.

The examination had always been available and those who wished to take the test could have done so, he said.

The president of the Hongkong Dental Association, Dr Michael Tsui, said

that requiring all dentists to sit the qualifying exam would help boost the quality of dental service in the territory and eliminate the unfairness stemming from the exemption.

Speaking after yesterday's opening ceremony of the association's Hongkong Expodent 1987 exhibition, Dr Tsui said about half of the body's 900-odd member dentists were at present registered under the exemption. About 1,100 dentists practise in Hongkong.

The policy change, to be brought about in two phases, would affect only those who sought registration after April 1990, Dr Tsui said.

By 1991, dentists trained in the US and Canada would have to take the qualifying exam before practising in Hongkong. By 1992, those trained in Hongkong and Commonwealth countries would also have to take the exam.

Dr Tsui said the association, which deemed the exemption unfair, first raised the issue two years ago with the Dental Council, which recently approved the universal registration exam after consulting the universities and colleges affected.

Dr Tsui said that in the meantime an ad hoc committee of the Medical Development Committee was studying whether the dental service in Hongkong was adequate.

The review was expected to be finished by the end of this year, he said.