

Policy Statement 2.7.2 – Delivery of Oral Health: Facilities: Hospital Dental Units

Position Summary

All major hospitals should have a specific dental unit that is appropriately staffed and equipped to deal with dental treatment and emergencies.

1. Background

- 1.1. Some hospitals have dental units which provide the following services usually in partnership with medical and surgical departments and specialists:
 - after hours emergency service;
 - maxillofacial and craniofacial services for trauma and head neck cancer patients;
 - specialist paediatric dental services;
 - treatment of complex or medically compromised patients;
 - treatment of oral conditions that arise as a consequence of patients' medical conditions or treatment thereof;
 - preparation of patients pre-surgery; and
 - craniofacial and oral rehabilitation of patients post-surgery.
- 1.2. Patients with multifaceted medical complexities and physical disabilities who are unsuitable for day care surgery often require in-patient admission for comprehensive dental treatment, usually under general anaesthetic.
- 1.3. Patients whose medical status could be compromised by dental disease and are unable to receive treatment other than in a hospital setting, require timely access to Hospital Dental Units.
- 1.4. As the demand for hospital-based medical services and the complexity of these services increases so too will the need for related dental services.
- 1.5. Some children may require lifelong special dental care due to the nature of their disease or disability. There is often a void in the continuity of care as they become adults.
- 1.6. Hospital dental units provide the following educational experiences:
 - multidisciplinary management of medically, physically and/or mentally impaired patients;
 - management of dental and medical emergencies;
 - oral and maxillofacial surgical and prosthetic training;
 - specialist paediatric dental training;
 - special needs dentistry training;
 - clinical research in various fields; and
 - management of craniofacial syndrome patients.

Definitions

- 1.7. HOSPITAL DENTAL UNIT is a dedicated facility with staff and equipment to cater for the dental needs of all patients of the hospital.
- 1.8. MENTORING is a mutually- beneficial relationship which involves a more experienced person helping a less experienced person to achieve their goals.

2. Position

- 2.1. Major hospitals should have a dental unit to provide for emergency and special dental needs of patients of the hospital.
- 2.2. Hospital dental units should provide a resident- level training position to ensure future workforce development in the field.
- 2.3. The minimum physical requirements for a medical hospital dental unit are outlined in the [Australasian Health Facilities Guidelines](#).
- 2.4. Hospital dental units should have operating theatre access without disparity to other health disciplines.
- 2.5. Plans for the continuity of oral health care must be in place for patients who are leaving a specialised dental unit.

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