

Policy Statement 2.7.3 – Delivery of Oral Health Care: Facilities: Dental General Anaesthesia Procedure Facilities

Position Summary

Government should provide resources and an appropriate legislative framework to ensure equal access to appropriately licensed general anaesthesia facilities that have the necessary staff and equipment to cater for the dental needs of patients.

1. Background

- 1.1. Many hospitals and day procedure centres have operating theatres, which can provide the opportunity for dental procedures to be performed under general anaesthesia. Only a small proportion of these facilities have the necessary equipment to perform dental procedures. General anaesthesia for dental procedures is also available at some certified dental practice facilities.
- 1.2. Access to appropriate facilities has been decreasing over recent years on the basis of profitability related to rebate schedules and funding models.
- 1.3. General anaesthesia is necessary to provide safe and comprehensive dental care for patients of all ages, especially those with behavioural, cognitive, medical or other issues that preclude treatment in the usual dental practice setting. For patients, some procedures are best provided under general anaesthetic.
- 1.4. Patients with complex disability and/or medical compromise may require a general anaesthetic for examination and radiographs, in order to develop a diagnosis and treatment plan such that the precise dental treatment needs, and theatre time can often not be established pre-operatively.
- 1.5. Dental procedures under general anaesthesia can be time consuming.
- 1.6. Preventable dental emergencies take up the limited resources in general anaesthetic facilities.

Definition

- 1.7. A DENTAL GENERAL ANAESTHESIA PROCEDURE FACILITY (DGAPF) is a licensed facility with an operating theatre or procedure room.

2. Position

- 2.1 Theatre funding for dental procedures should be adequate.
- 2.2 The dental patient requiring general anaesthesia should have the right to access a suitable facility in a timely manner.
- 2.3 Government should provide resources and an appropriate legislative framework to ensure equitable access to DGAPF for all dental patients.
- 2.4 Timely access to DGAPF is required to permit management of conditions requiring immediate attention.
- 2.5 Reasonable access to DGAPF is required for the management of less urgent, difficult to treat conditions.
- 2.6 Access to appropriate dental care under general anaesthesia is as essential as that for other medical procedures.
- 2.7 Hospitals and day procedure centres providing general anaesthesia should not discriminate against dental patients on the grounds of hospital funding models.
- 2.8 The Child Dental Benefits Schedule and any other government dental schemes should provide funding for treatment provided in a hospital under general anaesthesia.

This Policy Statement is linked to other Policy Statements: 2.1 National Oral Health, 2.3.6 Delivery of Oral Health Care: Special Groups: Disabled Persons, 2.3.8 Delivery of Oral Healthcare: Special Groups: Infants and Pre-School Children, 2.7.1 Delivery of Oral Health Care: Facilities: Dental Hospitals, 2.7.2 Delivery of Oral Health Care: Facilities: Medical Hospital Dental Units, 3.4 Specialisation in Dentistry & 5.11 Credentialing for Hospital Practice, 2.3.1_Children.

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