

Policy Statement 6.3 – Dental Health Care Workers (and Students) Infected with Blood-Borne Viruses

Position Summary

Dental personnel infected with blood-borne viruses should be able to continue to participate in dental practice without affecting public safety.

1. Background

- 1.1. Dental Health Care Workers (DHCWs) are at risk of contracting a disease acquired in the course of their duties. Community concern about the risk of acquiring a blood-borne virus in a health care setting generated a review of infection control policies and procedures, and publication of Australian National Guidelines for the Management of Health Care Workers Known to be infected with Blood-borne Viruses, published by the Communicable Disease Network of Australia.
- 1.2. Transmission of blood-borne viruses from DHCWs to patients in the provision of dental health care is extremely rare.
- 1.3. The Board requires that registrants must practise in a way that maintains and enhances public health and safety by ensuring that the risk of the spread of infectious diseases is prevented or minimised.

Definitions

- 1.4. ALLIED DENTAL PERSONNEL are those, other than dentists, working in the provision of dental services.
- 1.5. BOARD is the Dental Board of Australia.
- 1.6. EXPOSURE PRONE PROCEDURE is a term usually characterised by the potential for direct contact between the skin (usually finger or thumb) of the DHCWs and sharp surgical instruments, needles, or sharp tissues (spicules of bone or teeth) in body cavities or in poorly visualised or confined body sites (including the mouth). In the broader sense an exposure prone procedure is considered to be any situation where there is a potentially high risk of transmission of blood-borne disease during dental procedures.

2. Position

- 2.1. Allied Dental Personnel have a duty of care to patients and therefore must be responsible for the protection of patients and other DHCWs against infection.
- 2.2. Allied Dental Personnel must have the same rights to confidential testing, counseling and treatment as the general population.
- 2.3. Allied Dental Personnel status and rights under anti-discrimination, privacy, equal opportunity and industrial relations legislations must be safeguarded.
- 2.4. All Allied Dental Personnel should be vaccinated against blood-borne viruses as appropriate for their health status.
- 2.5. Allied Dental Personnel performing exposure prone procedures should monitor their infection status for blood-borne viruses in accordance with Communicable Disease Network of Australia (CDNA) guidelines.

Policy Statement 6.3

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