

# Policy Statement 3.14 – The Role of Non-Dental Practitioners in Oral Health

## Position Summary

Education and training courses for some non-dental practitioners should include a dental component enabling them to understand the oral health consequences of their care and to provide oral health promotion and dental screening. Education and training courses for emergency practitioners should include a dental component enabling them to provide dental first-aid.

## 1. Background

- 1.1. A wide range of healthcare providers influence the diet and lifestyle choices made by people of all ages and thereby contribute to their oral health.
- 1.2. There is a need to develop the capacity of non-dental practitioners to assist in meeting the oral health needs of the community.
- 1.3. Evidence supports links between oral health and general health.
- 1.4. Some medical conditions may be exacerbated by poor oral health or have deleterious effects upon oral health.
- 1.5. Some medications and treatments can have a detrimental effect on oral health.
- 1.6. Increasing tooth retention by older people will lead to more of these people requiring assistance with the ongoing oral health care and the need for appropriately trained aged care facility staff.
- 1.7. Patients who are experiencing dental emergencies and injuries often present to healthcare practitioners other than dentists.
- 1.8. The prognosis for dental injuries is often dependent on early and correct treatment.
- 1.9. Dentistry is different to most of other health care in that the vast majority of dental services are procedural and provided in small office-based practices in the private sector, often separate from other health facilities.

### Definitions

- 1.10. BOARD is the Dental Board of Australia.
- 1.11. NON-DENTAL PRACTITIONERS are health care providers other than those who are registered by the Board.
- 1.12. SCREENING is the intentional observation of patients to recognise potential deviations from normal health.

## 2. Position

- 2.1. Non-dental practitioners providing oral health care services should be aware of the regulatory framework surrounding the provision of such care.
- 2.2. Non-dental practitioners, who have been educated about oral health and oral diseases can attend to patients' oral hygiene and screen for dental problems, and so facilitate early intervention by dentists and address the social, biological, environmental and behavioral determinates of oral diseases.
- 2.3. Non-dental practitioners should consider the potential for oral health consequences in the care of their patients.
- 2.4. All healthcare and aged care facilities should have protocols for the detection of oral diseases and injuries in their residents/patient, and timely referral to a dentist.

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- 2.5. Education and training courses for some non-dental practitioners should include a dental component enabling them to understand the oral health consequences of their care and to provide oral health promotion and dental screening.
  - 2.6. Education and training courses in emergency management should include a component enabling them to provide dental first-aid.
  - 2.7. Health care practitioners should work together to:
    - ensure a better understanding of each other's knowledge and skills;
    - adopt a cooperative and interdisciplinary approach to treating patients where appropriate; and
    - promote consistent health messages

#### **Policy Statement 3.14**

Adopted by ADA Federal Council, November 18/19, 2010.

Amended by ADA Federal Council, April 16/17, 2015.

Amended by ADA Federal Council, August 23/24, 2018