

Policy Statement 5.1 – Dentistry and Third Parties

Position Summary

The dentist-patient relationship is essential for good health outcomes and it is unacceptable for Third Parties to undermine the relationship. Third Parties should provide equal rebates for the same dental service under the same policy or scheme in the same jurisdiction and this should be enforced by Government intervention.

1. Background

- 1.1. Third parties have been associated with dentistry for many years, mostly servicing commercial needs and opportunities related to dentistry.
- 1.2. Healthcare provider comparison websites and product or services rating can be questionable sources of information for the public as they may be misleading, unmoderated, have conflicts of interest, promote certain products and services, and are open to manipulation. Such websites may contravene Ahpra and the Dental Board of Australia's Guidelines for Advertising a Regulated Health Service.
- 1.3. Some Third Parties interfere with the dentist/patient relationship by providing differential rebates for the same service to the detriment of the patient.

Definitions

- 1.4. A THIRD PARTY is an outside body that can influence the relationship between the dentist and the patient. These include but are not limited to:
 - funding agencies (e.g. government departments, agencies and statutory authorities, private health insurance and private health organisations) which have responsibility for the entire fee for service, or part thereof;
 - owners of dental clinics who are not dentists, including health insurance funds, corporations and the public sector (government departments);
 - regulatory authorities;
 - the dental industry;
 - professional indemnity providers; and
 - appointment and rating websites.
- 1.5. PATIENT is a person receiving health care or any substitute authorised decision maker for those who do not have the capacity to make their own decisions.

2. Position

- 2.1. Third parties must not influence the primary relationship between the dentist and the patient in any way that diminishes a patient's right to achieve long term optimum oral health.
- 2.2. Third Parties must provide equal rebates to patients for the same dental service under the same policy and this should be enforced by Government intervention.
- 2.3. Third Parties should not limit or influence the patient's choice of dental provider.
- 2.4. Third parties should not impose business rules that favour any particular dentist or prevent patients from accessing rebates for appropriate dental care.
- 2.5. All dentists should be treated equally by Third Parties.
- 2.6. All Third Parties must use the current version of the ADA's *The Australian Schedule of Dental Services and Glossary* which is the recognised definitive uniform coding system for dental services in Australia,

which should be easily accessible.

- 2.7. Third party complaints resolution mechanisms must be transparent and procedurally fair for patients and dentists.
- 2.8. Rating sites for dentists should not be published and governments should legislate to prevent them.

Policy Statement 5.1

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