

COMMUNITY ORAL HEALTH PROMOTION: DENTAL VOLUNTEERS

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Many Australian dentists, allied dental personnel and other committed personnel give their time freely to provide oral health services, strategic management, education and training, equipment and materials to persons living in regions where the circumstances restrict the provision of adequate health care services. Dental societies, service clubs and missionary organisations have also provided support.
- 1.2 Over the years there have been several ongoing programmes in Australia and overseas sustained by Australian volunteers.
- 1.3 **Definition**
 - 1.3.1 DENTAL VOLUNTEER is a person who provides dental services and support to persons without direct fee or material reward.

2 Principles

- 2.1 Dentistry, with its portable skills and strong preventive emphasis, fits readily into a transportable model for humanitarian assistance.
- 2.2 The efforts of dental volunteers need to be coordinated to be efficient and effective.
- 2.3 ADA has a role in recognising and supporting its ADA dental volunteers.
- 2.4 Communities will be best assisted when aid is sustainable and focused on disease prevention. Strategies for local provision of ongoing care to the community include the development of a local workforce.
- 2.5 Authorities and local communities, their laws, ethics and cultural beliefs need to be respected.

3 Policy

- 3.1 Dentists, allied dental personnel and others should support dental volunteer programmes.
- 3.2 The ultimate aim of volunteering should be to empower local communities to provide their own ongoing care.
- 3.3 Dental volunteer programmes should have continuity and ongoing support from non-government organisations. Suitably trained personnel should be present to adequately deal with the consequences of treatment.
- 3.4 Dental volunteer projects must have the authority of and work in conjunction with relevant authorities and conform to the legal requirements.

- 3.5 Dental volunteers must act in an ethical manner and respect the cultural beliefs and practices of the local community.
- 3.6 Dental volunteers and directors of projects should review the programmes they participate in to ensure their ongoing relevance. This could include studying the oral health profile of the community, any unique local factors contributing to oral disease and strategies for disease control.
- 3.7 Every effort should be made to protect the health and safety of dental volunteers, local personnel and patients. Volunteers should carry appropriate travel, indemnity and medical insurance.

Policy Statement 2.2.10

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