

Referral to The Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne

Context or purpose

The Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne (RDHM) accepts referrals from public and private health practitioners, including RDHM employed practitioners, to Emergency Services, Specialist Services and the Dental Teaching Clinics.

Policy

RDHM referral policy relates to referrals made from both external and internal health practitioners and outlines the parameters for DHSV to provide high level access to dental care including:

- the need for more urgent clinical conditions (e.g. oral cancer)
- requirements of a tertiary teaching hospital
- appropriate use of public resources

Services are provided by registered specialists, dentists, other DHSV health care professionals, as well as specialists in training from The Melbourne Dental School and RMIT University.

Patient Eligibility

Services offered at RDHM are available to patients who meet the eligibility requirements to receive treatment as outlined in the RDHM Patient Eligibility Policy.

Exceptions

DHSV may offer specialist services to other patients if:

- referred to the Domiciliary Services Unit
- emergency treatment under general anaesthesia (usually extractions) is required
- the case is exceptional and beneficial for specialist dental teaching clinics

For any further queries for other exceptional cases please contact Patient Services on (03) 9341 1000

Duration of Eligibility versus Waiting Lists

Referring practitioners should take into account the likely period that the patient will remain eligible for DHSV services (e.g. the life of a current health care card). If the concession card eligibility expires during a commenced course of care, the treatment will be completed. However, if a further course of care is required, the patient may be offered referral to a private practitioner.

Fees

Referring practitioners should ensure all patients understand that fees will be charged for most specialist treatments, including screening visits that may or may not lead to treatment. The fees (or co-payments) for patients receiving a DHSV specialist service (regardless of age), are based on the Department of Health Public Dental Fees Policy. Further information regarding patient fees can be found at www.health.vic.gov.au/dentistry/key-policies.htm

The patient will be informed of the first visit fee when contacted to make the initial appointment. Once the treatment plan is determined, the patient is provided with a fees estimate and asked for financial consent. The cost of treatment to the patient may influence which care option they consent to.

All treatment provided in the Dental Teaching Clinics are free of charge. In cases where it is identified that the patient requires additional treatment in a specialist clinic or general dentistry unit, fees may apply as outlined above.

Referral for Emergency Care

Emergency dental care is available 365 days a year to all people through self-referral or transfer from a metropolitan public dental agency.

Treatment urgency will be assessed by using the Emergency Care Demand Management triage tool either directly at RDHM or at the initial public dental agency.

Referrals to Specialist Services

The patient must

- agree to be referred.
- meet the referral criteria for the selected specialty

Accepted referrals are placed on the appropriate clinic waiting list.

Referring practitioners

- will receive written confirmation of referral receipt and a discharge summary on completion of treatment.
- must accept ongoing responsibility for the patient's general dental management at all times including while waiting for specialist care, to ensure the continuity of care for all patients referred for specialist services

Specialist services can be offered to ineligible patients if the case is exceptional and a benefit can be demonstrated (for example uncommon presentations that would provide an opportunity for postgraduate teaching). Specialist services to ineligible patients attract full fees.

Ongoing general dental care

The referring practitioner is responsible for the ongoing general dental care of any patient they refer to a RDHM specialist service.

Referrals to the Dental Teaching Clinics

RDHM supports the education of future dental professionals through its Dental Teaching Clinics, where students provide dental treatment to members of the community under the supervision of a range of registered oral health practitioners.

Patients referred to the Dental Teaching Clinics may be requested to attend a screening consultation to determine their suitability for treatment. If the patient is unsuitable for treatment in the Dental Teaching Clinics, the patient and the referring clinic will receive a letter of explanation and the patient may be directed to return to the referring clinic.

Additionally, patients who meet the eligibility criteria may contact RDHM directly and refer themselves to the Dental Teaching Clinics.

All treatment provided in the Dental Teaching Clinics is free of charge and generally waiting times are significantly shorter. In cases where it is identified that the patient requires additional treatment in a specialist clinic, fees may apply.

Referrals received in error

Any referral received at RDHM and addressed to another health service or health professional not appointed to work at RDHM, is to be returned to the original referrer. Subsequently, if the referral is received again it may only be accepted by RDHM for processing if the referring health service includes a cover letter stating that the referral has been re-directed with approval of both the original referrer and the patient.

Definitions

Eligibility: The criteria patients are required to meet to be able to receive dental treatment at The Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne.

Priority Access: Identified groups of the community are given priority to receive dental treatment. This includes being offered the next available appointment and skipping the waiting list.

Student in the Dental Teaching Clinics: A person undertaking studies to become one of the following

- a dentist
- an advanced dental technician/prosthetist
- a dental hygienist
- a dental therapist
- an oral health therapist

Referring health practitioner: A health practitioner as recognised in Australia, from either the dental or medical field.

Public dental agency: Community health agencies delivering dental care to eligible public patients.

Emergency demand triage tool: A decision tree questionnaire used to ascertain the treatment urgency according to patient responses to each question.

Revision date	Policy owner
November 2017	Operations Manager
Approved by	Date approved
Executive Director RDHM	November 2014

Related documents

Department of Health Eligibility and priority access for public dental services policy
<http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/Eligibility-and-priority-access-for-public-dental-services-policy-June-2014>

Department of Health Public dental urgent denture care wait list policy
<http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/Public-dental-urgent-denture-care-wait-list-policy-June-2014>

Department of Health Public dental non-urgent care wait list policy
<http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/Public-dental-non-urgent-care-wait-list-policy-June-2014>

Department of Health Public Dental Fees Policy, September 2014
<http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/Public-Dental-Fees-Policy-September-2014>

RDHM Patient Eligibility Policy

Informed Consent Policy and Procedure
<http://intranet.dhsv.org.au/download/d3c97dc2/informed-consent-procedure-pr-a018-03.pdf>

RDHM Triage or Emergency Patients Policy and Procedure

Clinical Handover Policy