



CDA Position on **Access to Oral Health Care for Canadians**

A daily regimen of brushing and flossing is an important part of good oral health while equitable access to professional dental care for **all** Canadians is essential for *diagnosis, prevention and treatment* leading to good oral and general health.

The Health Canada Oral Health Report Card (Canada Health Measures Survey 2010) indicates that most Canadians have access to professional dental care and, as a result, have good oral health. The study and related research findings also provide evidence that poor oral health is experienced by those Canadians who do not have access to regular dental care. Although, this reflects only a minority of Canadians it is important to note that these groups need the dental profession to advocate on their behalf for improved access to care. The groups within this minority for whom access to care is a known problem include: *seniors, low-income populations, people with special needs, children and Aboriginal peoples.*

Canada has one of the best oral health care delivery systems in the world with care primarily delivered through private dental clinics, but not all Canadians can access dental offices. Alternative models of care or funding should, therefore, be explored to alleviate such inequities.

Solutions to the access to oral health care issue are complex, however, and no single organization, government agency or community can be expected to solely address oral health disparities of certain groups of Canadians. CDA believes that broader access to oral health care is possible through partnerships among the dental profession, other health professions, the federal and provincial governments, provincial and municipal dental public health programs and non-government community agencies. A collaborative approach among those who have the capacity to contribute to addressing the challenge of equitable access to dental care will ensure good oral and general health for all Canadians.

The CDA, as the body that advocates for the principal providers of oral health care, recommends the development of a national action plan to reduce the barriers to access to dental care. The action plan should incorporate the following goals and principles:

1. Oral health is an integral part of general health;
2. All Canadians have the right to good oral health;
3. Dental caries (decay) is a preventable chronic disease;

4. A collaborative approach is needed among oral health care providers, medical and other health care providers, along with provincial and federal health departments and educators;
5. Dentists, as the oral health experts in Canada, play a primary role in planning and implementing recommendations and initiatives to prevent and manage oral disorders; and
6. Creating new minimum mandatory standards for Canadian dental public health programs with the resources to meet these standards; and
7. Alternative models of care or funding should be explored to alleviate access to care inequities.

For more detailed background information on the above please see the CDA Access to Care position paper.

*Approved
CDA Board of Directors
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