




Environmental Barriers to Treating Adults with Developmental Disabilities

Canadian Society for Disability and Oral Health

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Three Barriers to Oral Health Treatment for Canadian Adults with DDs

1. Low fees paid by dental plans for Adults with DDs
 2. Lack of Access to Suitable Facilities (including anesthesia) for complex needs patients
 3. Lack of training and experience among dentists to treat adults with DDs
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1. Low fees paid by dental plans for ADDs

- Provincial dental plans for ADDs (Plans) pay less than half of Provincial Dental Association (DA) recommended fees.
- Plans cover fewer treatments than the CDA recommended list of treatments.
- Provincial Governments use the provincial DA annual fee guides for government employee plans.
- Using the smaller and cheaper Plans for Adults with DDs is Government-sanctioned discrimination.

2. Lack of Access to Suitable Facilities

- Adults with DDs may require general anesthesia if they are unable to tolerate dental treatment while awake or under conscious sedation.
- Access to anesthesia for dental treatment is limited because dental treatment is not part of Medicare and Plans may not cover anesthesia.
- In BC, PHSA has failed to support Community Dental Partners Program for anesthesia. Private clinics have withdrawn from CDPP.
- Many community dental clinics don't offer physical supports, such as lifts, for adults with physical challenges.

3. Lack of Training and Experience Among Dentists

- Treatment of ADDs is not mandated in the CDAC curriculum for dental students.
 - Studies show that education and familiarity are key to increasing dentist comfort in treating ADDs.
 - Dentists may not know and follow principles of patient centred care when treating ADDs.
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Path forward

1. CDA and provincial Dental Associations should ask provincial governments to use the same fee guide for ADDs that covers provincial employees and to ensure access to dental anesthesia where it is necessary for the safety and comfort of ADDs.
2. CDAC must mandate training in treating ADDs in undergraduate dental program, including didactic and clinical training.
3. Dentists must adopt patient centred care practices so that patients with ADDs are treated with dignity and respect.