Working together: Oral health, disability and partnerships in healthcare.

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Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria

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- **Mission**: To improve health outcomes for adults with developmental disability by developing the capacity of mainstream health service systems to better meet their needs.

- **Funding**: Disability Services, Vic. Dept of Human Services

- **Activities**: Educational, Research, Clinical, Advocacy.
The mouth is an area of professional demarcation – primarily the realm of oral health practitioners and not doctors.

For oral health professionals all the important structures lie in the mouth....

In contrast, the first thing a doctor sees when s/he looks in the mouth are the tonsils!
People with cognitive and communication difficulties are not interested in those professional practice boundaries.

They just want health professionals to work together to treat illness and pain and optimise health and wellbeing.

They challenge us to work together as members of a healthcare team.
Good oral health is an essential component for good general health – and to achieve optimum health outcomes we must work together as a team – each contributing our areas of expertise.

We are all healthcare professionals wanting the best for our patients.
Doctors and oral health professionals can work together in:

- **Reducing social** inequities – advocacy for disadvantaged community groups.

- **Ensuring health promotion strategies** are available for people with disabilities (*Healthy diet, exercise, drinking water, good oral health protocols*).

- **Providing disease prevention interventions** - Regular medical and oral health assessments (at least annual).

- **Ensuring timely treatment and follow up.**

**By integrating oral health into strategies for promoting general health we can enhance both general and oral health.**
We can collaborate in solving diagnostic dilemmas.

For example someone who has a severe communication impairments and stops eating may:

- Have oral pain and disease (oral health).
- May have nausea, oesophageal pain (reflux) or stricture, abdominal pain, constipation. (physical health).
- May have depression, mania, psychosis, anxiety (mental health).
- OR may not like the company or the food! (environmental factors).

It’s a Sherlock Holmes exercise to work out the cause!
We need to work together to solve the puzzle.
**Dentists, doctors and disability professionals**

- **Working together** – in partnerships, referrals, discussion, problem solving.
- **Using available systems** to facilitate access and care.
- **Respecting each others** knowledge and skills.

→ So our patients have an optimal quality of life.

**Good health is the foundation for a good life.**
Further information

Dental Health Services
Victoria,
Special Needs Dental Health Services.

Monash University,
Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria.


www.cddh.monash.org

- 6 DVD based video stories
- Study Guides - Student Workbook and Tutor Guide
- Knowledge Base (textbook)