



### *Issue:* **Dental Records**

*Raised by:* Oral Health Services NT

*Background:* There is interest in integrating separate collections of dental records of remote clients, into the standardised medical record format currently being implemented throughout RHB. This was investigated prior to commencement of the file standardisation project, but on project implementation, the file standardisation team handled only those dental records that were already held within a medical record.

*Discussion:* Issues involved are quite extensive and complex, and only the key points are able to be recorded in this communiqué:

Agreement. It is desirable to have records together to avoid duplication, create a more complete record in the remote health centre, provide dental teams with access to more complete medical histories etc. This does necessitate a cooperative approach at Health Centre level, and dental teams will need to be able to access medical records.

Consistency. There is an imperative to establish a consistent standard across the Territory. However, the model of remote dental visits in the Centre is markedly different from Top End in that a dental van is used to visit communities and health centres are infrequently used for provision of dental care. Therefore access to HC medical records would be problematic. It appears an exception needs to be made to not include dental records in the health centre medical record in Central Australia. Effectively, this communiqué applies to Top End Remote Health.

Standard format. It is sensible to keep all dental records together in the one section. The most suitable location of dental records in the standard format is not readily evident, given that inserting a new divider midway in the existing dividers is not feasible at this point (two-thirds of the File Standardisation Project is complete). The consensus is to create another section dedicated to dental records that will be placed at the back of the record i.e. behind "Section 7: Inactive".

Implementation of this new standard will be progressive. Oral Health will be involved in the production of the new divider that is required, along with responsibility for integration of the records. Implementation at health centre level will take various forms. It may be possible to piggy back the implementation of this new standard with the file standardisation project work in those sites that are still outstanding. Those sites that have had their files sorted will need to be revisited at some stage.

(It is noted that where the file standardisation team have previously visited a community and encountered any dental related documents already in the medical record, they have placed those documents in either the "Screening" or "Correspondence" sections as appropriate.)

*Consultation:* Oral Health Team, File Standardisation Project Officer, DHCS Records Policy Officer

*References:* Nil

*Outcome:* A distinct "Dental" section will be incorporated into the standard medical record format, to be placed following the "Inactive" section and only used when dental records are present. (Central Australian sites visited by the mobile dental service are excluded).

Implementation of this standard will be managed by external assistance in the first instance, and by dental teams after initial amalgamation.

Atlas documentation will be amended to reflect the new standard.