



DENTAL SERVICES IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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ABSTRACT

The problem of providing adequate dental services for the whole population constantly faces the dental profession in this and all other countries.

The adequacy or otherwise of the dental services available in South Australia has been questioned. The purpose of this survey for an M.D.S. thesis was therefore to provide information concerning the various facets of dental services in this State, to discuss the problems associated with the provision of an adequate service and to suggest avenues of future development.

Methods of collecting data for this survey included perusal of historical and contemporary literature and the examination of mail questionnaires sent to; all the dentists in South Australia; 2,000 randomly selected adult members of the general public of South Australia; and 30 South Australian childrens institutions. Information was also collected by correspondence with dental health authorities in many countries. Epidemiological studies of various groups of the South Australian population provided information relating to the need for dental care.

The results of this survey demonstrate the overall inadequacy of dental services in South Australia. While a great need exists in this State for dental care there is a considerable lack of public demand for this health service. The results emphasise the inability of the present dental workforce to deal with the problem by therapeutic means alone and indicate an urgent need for a full-scale preventive programme. Increased surgery efficiency, increased recruitment to the profession, especially of women, and the greatly increased use of dental auxiliaries are methods which have been suggested to decrease the great residue of dental disease. The increased use of auxiliary dental personnel will not be possible unless amendments are made to the South Australian Dentists Act.

Energetic research in public health dentistry, preventive dentistry and methods of dental education is suggested as the key to providing adequate dental services for the whole population.