

## **SPECIALIST DENTISTS**

The recognition of specialties and specialist practitioners serves to identify to the public and to the dental and allied professions the individual practitioners who have special competence in a specified area of dental practice.

### **Oral Pathologist**

Oral pathology is the specialty of dentistry and pathology, which deals with the nature, identification and management of diseases affecting the oral and maxillofacial regions. It is a science that investigates the causes, processes and effects of these diseases. The practice of oral pathology includes research, diagnosis of diseases using clinical, radiographic, microscopic, biochemical or other examinations, management of patients and forensic evaluations. Oral pathology is one of ten specialties officially recognized by the Australian Dental Association and the federal government.

Oral pathologists operate biopsy services for dental and medical professionals, and many also operate clinical diagnosis and management clinics (clinical oral pathology).

### **Dento-maxillofacial Radiologist**

Dento-maxillofacial radiology is that part of dental practice which deals with diagnostic imaging procedures applicable to the hard and soft tissues of the oral and maxillofacial region and to other structures which are relevant for the proper assessment of oral conditions.

The dento-maxillofacial radiologist has new imaging modalities with lower radiation exposure, particularly cone-beam computed tomography, that improve interpretive abilities for the diagnosis and treatment planning of patients for orthodontics and oral surgery including dental implants.

### **Endodontist**

Endodontics is the specialty of dentistry that is concentrated on the prevention, diagnosis, cause and treatment of diseases and injuries to the dental pulp (e.g. the soft tissues in the hollow centre of the tooth).

Endodontists are highly knowledgeable and skilled on the morphology, physiology and pathology of the human tooth, in particular the dental pulp, root and its surrounding tissues.

### **Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon**

Oral and maxillofacial surgery is the specialty that combines surgical training with dental expertise for the diagnosis and treatment of diseases, injuries, tumours and deformities of the face and jaws. This encompasses:

Dentoalveolar surgery (impacted and buried teeth, cysts, etc)

Dental implants

Facial fractures

Management of facial disfigurements

Management of cleft lip and palate

Management of deformities of the face and jaws

Management of tumours and maxillofacial cancer

An oral and maxillofacial surgeon is a regional specialist surgeon treating the anatomical area of the mouth, jaws and the face as well as associated structures.

### **Orthodontist**

An orthodontist is a dental specialist who works to prevent or correct misaligned teeth and jaws or faulty occlusions. A person may seek the services of an orthodontist for cosmetic reasons as well as health reasons. Beside the insecurity and low self-esteem that dental irregularities may cause, they can also affect a person's ability to chew and speak. Severely misaligned teeth and jaws can cause snoring, sleep apnoea and other breathing problems.

Heredity, or dental problems that run in the family, is the biggest reason that someone may need to see an orthodontist. Other reasons include tooth decay and accidents or injuries that affect the structure of the mouth.

The orthodontist supervises the growth and development of the dentition and its related anatomical structures, including preventive and corrective procedures of dentofacial irregularities that require repositioning of the teeth, jaws and/or soft tissues by functional or mechanical means.

### **Paediatric dentist**

Paediatric dentistry is the branch of dentistry dealing specifically with the prevention and the treatment of dental diseases and abnormalities in children and their associated developmental and behavioural problems, including those with specific medical challenges.

A paedodontist, or paediatric dentist, receives training in child psychology, growth and development in addition to his or her regular dental training. They are an ideal choice for children with fears or behavioural problems that make visits to the regular dentist unproductive.

Paedodontists care for children from the time their first tooth appears until he or she has all their adult teeth with a heavy focus on preventative oral care to reduce the risk of future complications. A paedodontist may also perform or refer for interceptive orthodontic treatment to prepare a child's mouth for future orthodontic work.

### **Periodontist**

The periodontist deals with the prevention, recognition, diagnosis and treatment of the diseases and disorders of the investing and supporting tissues of natural teeth or their substitutes.

A periodontist has a variety of treatments to aid gum disease depending on its severity. This includes non-surgical and surgical treatments. The most common periodontal surgical treatments are pocket reduction procedures, tissue and bone regenerative procedures, crown lengthening for aesthetics and quality dentistry, soft tissue grafts and ridge augmentation. Periodontist also diagnose, treatment plan and surgically place dental implants through a multi-discipline approach that may involve an orthodontist, prosthodontist or general dentist.

**Prosthodontist**

A prosthodontist is a dental specialist skilled in the replacement of missing teeth and the restoration and maintenance of natural teeth for oral health, function and appearance. They are trained to deal with simple and complicated restorations of the whole mouth as well as treating facial deformities. Common procedures treated by a prosthodontist may include dentures, partial dentures, fixed bridges, crowns, dental implants and veneers.

**Special Needs Dentistry (tertiary course currently being developed)**

A special needs dentist deals with patients where intellectual disability, medical, physical or psychiatric conditions require special methods or techniques to prevent or treat oral health problems, or where such conditions necessitate special dental treatment plans.

People of all ages may have special conditions such as stroke, spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, mental retardation, Down syndrome, genetic disorders, Alzheimer's disease, arthritis, autoimmune diseases or the complexities of aging.

Dentistry for people with special needs is a personally rewarding experience that tests the creativity and resourcefulness of the clinician to provide the basic dental needs to people living with extraordinary circumstances.