

Heidarirad F.

THE DENTAL HEALTH DELIVERY SYSTEM IN IRAN

Scientific supervisor PhD, assoc. prof. Tarasenko O. A.

1st Department of Therapeutic Dentistry

State Belarussian Medical University, Minsk

Dental services in Iran are provided by public and private sectors. Near 60% of the population live in cities. About 80% of dental services are provided by private practices in cities, 70% of oral health services are delivered by the governmental sector in rural areas.

In 1972, Iran collaborated with the World Health Organisation to streamline health care delivery into 4 levels: health houses, health centers, urban centers, and district centers. A health house is the basic rural facility. It covers one or several villages (near 1,500 people). It is staffed by a male and female auxiliary health worker, or 'behvarz', who offer Primary Health Care. Candidates to this post are selected from young and promising residents and are trained for 2 years at special training centers. Now there are nearly 15,000 health houses and 30,000 'behvarzes' in the villages. They cover 85% of the rural population. This first level of the Dental Health Delivery System is intended for primary prevention and removal of risk factors. 'Behvarzes' are responsible for oral health education, periodic examination of teeth, and referrals to higher levels (rural and urban health centers). They also supervise sodium fluoride mouth rinsing in rural areas. In addition to 'behvarzes', school health workers and oral hygienists are also involved at this level.

A rural health center is a village-based facility which covers 1–5 health houses (near 2,500 people). It is staffed by a physician, several health technicians and administrative personnel. At the second level oral hygienists and dentists in health centers supervise the 'behvarzes'. They also cover the early diagnosis and primary treatment of simple dental problems, deliver primary oral health care services such as fillings, pulpotomies, extraction of infected roots, fluoride therapy and scaling.

An urban health center has the same personnel as a rural health center but covers near 12,000 people. At the third level dentists together with dental nurses and technicians are responsible for the management and treatment of dental and oral diseases.

A district health center is a supervising entity, which supports the preventive and ambulatory health care systems in the district. They accept referral cases from both the rural and urban health centers. At fourth level advanced treatment is offered by specialists in different disciplines at university health centers in the cities. This specialized treatment will be transferred to district health centers when the required facilities and manpower are available.

Thus, dividing the dental service into levels helps to achieve maximum efficiency when first aid is provided by non-specialized personnel, simple cases are treated by qualified specialists, and complex cases are treated by highly qualified doctors.