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Evaluating the complexity of patients using the Case Mix Tool

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Background:

The Primary Care Dental Service (PCDS) provides comprehensive dental care for adults and children who cannot access routine dental care in regular dental practices due to their additional health or social needs. As a tier 2 setting, it is commissioned to provide care for patients that level of complexity requires clinicians with enhanced skills or specialists.

Objectives:

This evaluation utilised the British Dental Association (BDA) Case Mix Tool to better understand the complexity of patients seen within the PCDS, to ensure that the patient base is appropriate for the primary care setting and that the skill-mix of staff is sufficient to meet their needs.

Methods:

Data on patient demographics, assigned clinicians and case mix scores were collected retrospectively from patient clinical records for all patients seen during a two week period, in February 2022. From the recorded case mix scores, the assigned weightings of each criterion generated by the BDA working group could then be applied. The weighting scores were summed, which was then compared to the level of complexity assigned by the BDA working group. Ethical approval was provided by the PCDS clinical audit lead and all patient data was anonymised.

Results:

In the evaluation period, 315 patients were seen across all five sites with an average case mix score of 14. The majority of patients were classed as moderate complexity, which compared to levels to the is appropriate for a tier 2 service. However, there were many patients that were classed as severely or extremely complex and there was a wide range of complexity across the sites.

Conclusion:

Overall, the PCDS patient base has appropriate complexity as per commissioning standards. However, the distribution of skills and equipment could be optimised to reflect the variation across sites. This evaluation provides a useful methodology to assess the complexity of a large patient base.

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