



Barwon Best Care



Return on Investment of Off-site Dental Services For Children Aged 0-5 Years : WIDE SMILES

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INTRODUCTION

The children in our region have experienced many emergency dental procedures including those requiring a general anaesthetic with long waiting lists. The Wide Smiles program began in 2013 and was a joint initiative of Barwon Health (BH) and Colac Area Health (CAH) designed to improve access for children to dental services. The Wide Smiles program provides outreach dental screening and preventative intervention to children at early learning centres, kindergartens and schools.

AIM

To compare return on investment (RoI) of the Wide Smiles program compared to in-clinic dental service.

METHODS

The number of children screened in the Wides Smiles program was 2369, 3497, 3439 and 4330 during 2013 to 2016, respectively. For the same years, the number of children treated in-clinic was 2960, 2806, 2550 and 3007, respectively.

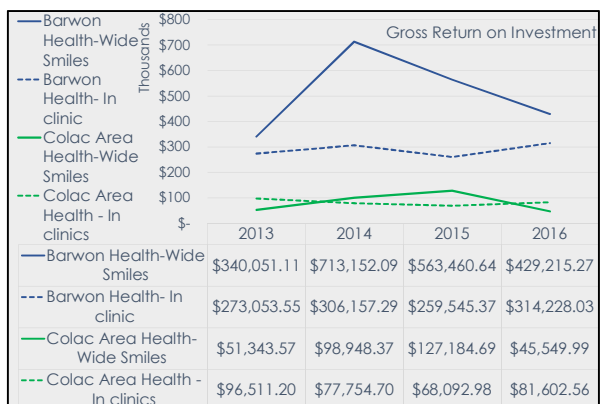
Participating early learning centres were from the suburbs or towns of Alvie, Anglesea, Apollo Bay, Barwon Heads, Bell Park, Bell Post Hill, Belmont, Birregurra, Breakwater, Camperdown, Clifton Springs, Colac, Corio, Drysdale, East Geelong, Forrest, Geelong, Geelong West, Grovedale, Hamlyn Heights, Herne Hill, Highton, Lara, Lavers Hill, Leopold, Lorne, Moriac, Newcomb, Newtown, Norlane, North Geelong, Ocean Grove, Portarlington, St Albans Park, Torquay, Whittington and Winchelsea.

RoI is the difference between service costs and budget based on the activity-based funding system. Costs, dental services, number of children and visits, Completed course of care (CoC) and Dental Weighted Activity Units (DWAUs) were recorded for 2013-2016. Annual gross RoI and RoI per unit of outcome were calculated and compared across off-site and in-clinic services.

RESULTS

At Barwon Health, the off-site service performed better than the in-clinic service by Gross RoI (\$550K vs \$290K), RoI/CoC (\$77 vs \$96), and RoI/DWAU (\$310 vs \$286) (all $p < 0.05$). There was no significant difference in RoI/child (\$191 vs \$118) and RoI/visit (\$77 vs \$71).

Similarly, at Colac Area Health the off-site service performed better than the in-clinic service by Gross RoI (\$95K vs \$82K), RoI/Coc (\$75 vs \$168) and RoI/visit (\$71 vs \$116) (all $p < 0.05$). There was no significant difference in RoI/Child (\$180 vs \$210) and ROI/DWAU (\$270 vs \$274).



CONCLUSION

Gross RoI of dental services for both off-site and in-clinic were positive. However, RoI was better for some measures of the off-site service e.g. per CoC, and DWAU for Barwon Health and per visit for Colac Area Health. The Wide Smiles program should continue, particularly, in locations where access to dental clinics is limited.

