THE WISCONSIN DENTAL PAIN PROTOCOL
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WISCONSIN DENTAL PAIN PROTOCOL track record of success in first two pilot communities

Dane County:

- Repeat dental pain visits declined since 2016 in all participating hospital Emergency Departments and Urgent Care Centers.

- The number of Emergency Department visits for dental pain decreased by more than half since 2014, dropping from 2,405 to 1,123 visits in 2018.

La Crosse County:

- In 2021, 550 referrals were made to community-based dental care

- There was an increase in the number of local anesthetics given for dental pain.

For complete reports from Dane and La Crosse counties, visit www.widentalpainprotocol.com

---

In Wisconsin, approximately 20,000 people show up in Emergency Departments (ED) and Urgent Care Centers (UCC) each year for non-traumatic dental pain. With the onset of the opioid epidemic, minimizing the prescription and use of opioids to treat dental pain has become a growing priority for health systems and communities across the state.

In 2014–2015, a group of health care, ED/UCC, dental, and public health leaders in Dane County convened a series of planning meetings to address dental pain presentations and opioid use. The goals of these meetings were to:

- **Establish effective intake, treatment, and discharge protocols for dental pain and infection,**

- **Minimize use of opioids in the treatment of dental pain,** and

- **Facilitate definitive treatment for emergent oral health issues to prevent the unnecessary return of dental pain patients to the emergency room.**

The result of this process was the creation of the Wisconsin Dental Pain Protocol (WDPP). The WDPP is a systemic approach implemented by ED, UCC, dentists and community partners to reduce opioid use for patients presenting with non-traumatic dental pain. The WDPP provides the evidence-based diagnosis, treatment and care management of oral pain and infection necessary to provide the highest standard of care and optimize ED and UCC staff time and resources. The WDPP also establishes partnerships and referral systems within communities to assure that patients presenting with dental pain receive definitive care for the cause of their pain.

The WDPP has three components which the health system and community partners implement through a collaborative planning and training process:

- **INTAKE: Create effective systems for triaging patients into the proper care**

- **CLINICAL ALGORITHM: Provide evidence-based pain and infection control, with an emphasis on non-opioid pain control regimen**

- **DISCHARGE: Facilitate patient receiving definitive care to address current problem and prevent readmission for same condition.**

By implementing the WDPP, health systems and communities can reduce opioid use and assure the best possible care for residents with dental pain.

For more information on the WDPP, including available training and evaluation resources, please visit www.widentalpainprotocol.com.

THE WISCONSIN DENTAL PAIN PROTOCOL

DISCUSSION: DENTAL PAIN ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS ?

- How common are non-traumatic dental pain (NTDP) presentations?

- What are current non-opioid pain control guidelines for NTDP?

- What are current opioid pain control guidelines for NTDP?

- Are local anesthetic blocks and infiltrations being given for NTDP?

- Do EDs/UCCs have dental anesthetic instruments, resources?

- What are current discharge protocols?

- Is the Clinical Algorithm being used and available via Epic or other online resources?

- Have you had high staff turnover?

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

The following is a list of tools and resources available for communities and health systems implementing the Wisconsin Dental Pain Protocol.

- **WDPP Presentations for Administrative Leadership**
  This powerpoint presentation provides an overview of the Wisconsin Dental Pain Protocol and action steps for administrative leadership.

- **Clinical Hands-on Training**
  These materials can be used by health systems to train clinical staff on the Wisconsin Dental Pain Protocol, particularly on the Clinical Algorithm for control of dental pain and infection and the administration of local anesthetics. Training Folder Resources available.

- **Webinar**
  This YouTube webinar, titled "Management of Dental Pain in the Emergency Room," can be viewed prior to or as part of educational programs for Emergency Department and Urgent Care Center staff on evidence-based practices for treating dental pain and infection.

- **Manikins for In-house Training on Oral Anesthetic Injections**
  These manikins of the oral cavity offer an opportunity for providers to practice before performing anesthetic injections in clinic. Through use of indicator lights and tones, these training manikins provide real-time evaluation of the injection technique and are available for use by health systems for training staff.

- **Technical Assistance for Care Coordination**
  For communities implementing the WDPP, technical assistance is available on implementing an effective dental care coordination process. Support includes access background information, materials, and contact information for other care coordinators.

- **Technical Assistance for Monitoring and Evaluation**
  There are national, state and local reports, templates and support materials available for assessing the impacts in any community implementing the WDPP.

- **Badger Tooth Box (Dental Syringes, Anesthetics)**
  The Badger Tooth Box is a starter kit of supplies for managing dental pain and infection, including topical anesthetic, dental syringes and needles, anesthetic carpules and copies of the Clinical Protocol.

For more information on the WDPP, including available training and evaluation resources, please visit www.widentalpainprotocol.com.