



6 October 2016

A recent news story about a child who remains in an Edmonton hospital after a dental procedure has raised concerns about the safety of dental surgery under general anaesthesia. A tragic story like this is thankfully very rare but always disturbing for the public, for dental professionals and for us as regulators.

We do not know the circumstances or what went wrong, but want to assure the public that general anaesthetic procedures in dentistry are very safe. The College of Dental Surgeons of BC has stringent standards to ensure that only highly qualified, trained individuals are providing this service, and that they are doing so in facilities that are approved and inspected under the direction of CDSBC's Sedation and General Anaesthetic Services Committee.

In British Columbia, all dental procedures that involve general anaesthesia require five qualified professionals: the anaesthetist, the operating dentist, the operative assistant, the recovery supervisor and the office assistant.

General anaesthesia, when performed by trained personnel in a facility that meets the standards, has a very low complication rate. General anaesthesia is used throughout the world every day to allow the treatment of dental decay for patients who are unable to tolerate treatment otherwise. Each patient and circumstance is unique, and professional consultation should be sought prior to making decisions on treatment and anaesthesia options. We at CDSBC have a strong commitment to patient safety during general anaesthesia.

Dental decay continues to be one of the most common reasons for a child to require sedation and/or general anaesthesia. Without proper treatment for dental decay, pain, swelling and life threatening infections can occur. For child patients in particular, treatment under general anaesthesia is often needed due to the complexity or length of the procedure.

Our heartfelt thoughts go out to this child and her family.

Jerome Marburg, Registrar/CEO
College of Dental Surgeons of BC

Dr. Tobin Bellamy, Certified Specialist in Oral Surgery
Chair, CDSBC Sedation and General Anaesthetic
Services Committee