ADA supports point-of-care COVID-19 testing by dentists

According to a new policy from the American Dental Association, point-of-care testing to screen patients for chronic diseases and other medical conditions, including COVID-19, that could complicate dental care or put the patient and dental staff at risk is within a dentist’s scope of practice.

"Yet currently, rapid and reliable COVID-19 tests are not available to dentists for in-office use, which makes no sense," said ADA President Dr. Daniel Klemmedson, who holds degrees in both dentistry and medicine, points out that dentists are doctors of oral health.

"It is well within dentists’ scope of practice to screen not just for COVID-19 infection but also other medical conditions that may affect dental care such as glucose levels, which help screen for diabetes, and blood pressure, which help screen for hypertension. Patients with abnormal test results would be referred to a physician, other qualified medical professional or medical facility for diagnosis and follow-up care," he said.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration includes dentists among those professionals who can test for COVID-19. In addition, the CDC recommends dental facilities consider implementing pre-procedure testing for COVID-19.

The ADA and state dental societies are actively advocating state and federal regulatory authorities to:

- Publicly recognize that point-of-care testing for COVID-19 is within dentists' existing scope of practice, and
- Make COVID-19 tests available for use in dental practices.

Given that patients receiving dental treatment may be pre-symptomatic (infected but will never exhibit symptoms), Klemmedson said it is critical to identify those individuals carrying the virus so it is possible to minimize their contacting and potentially infecting others.

(Source: ADA)