**Positive review of HIV health staff ban**

The Department of Health has confirmed that the policy which currently prevents HIV-positive surgeons and dentists from working in the UK is being reviewed.

Under Department of Health rules, HIV-positive health workers working in surgery, dentistry and specialist nursing, plus obstetrics and gynaecology are not allowed to carry out invasive surgery or ‘exposure prone procedures’ that could risk blood contamination.

The announcement has been welcomed by campaigners and Aids charities, who say advancements in HIV therapy drugs makes it easier for people to undertake such clinical roles.

British policy is stricter than in many European countries plus the US and Australia, where dentists with HIV can work.

According to reports, there have been no reported healthcare worker to patient HIV transmissions in the UK, and only four such cases recorded worldwide and furthermore, dentists with HIV are permitted to work in the US and Australia.

The Department of Health guidance recommends that healthcare workers infected with HIV do not undertake these procedures.*

One dental professional said: "I think that this review hopefully leading to a change in stance by the DH, has been a long-time coming.

"However the chance of an accidental injury with a contaminated instrument to a healthcare professional is very real. I believe that healthcare professionals never differentiate between patients.”

The guidance on the policy is currently being reviewed by the UK Advisory Panel for Healthcare Workers Infected with Blood-borne Viruses (UKAP), the Advisory Group on Hepatitis and the Expert Advisory Group on Aids.

The DH has reportedly said that the review is expected to be completed within the next few months, and that it would consider any recommendations received from the three advisory panels.

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*Dental Divas launches

Dental Divas, an American organisation designed to support the needs of women dentists, has announced the offering of a month-long ‘Dental Divas Online’. The interactive website allows members to connect with other dentists, providing women dentists a place to share their ideas and network themselves. According to an ADA study, the dental industry is comprised of 40 per cent women dentists, and yet until recently, there were very few options in the form of resources, networking, and support for the challenges that women dentists face. The interactive website provides informative articles and a variety of discussions on hot topics of interest, such as running a practice, peer advice, job opportunities and even help finding maternity leave fill-in. Visit DentalDivasOnline.com.

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**‘Meet the Dentist’**

A dentist and her nurses in Germany have reportedly changed their uniforms to cleaner-maximising ‘Alpine-lounge’-themed outfits in a supposed bid to ease patient’s fears. According to Metro, Dr Marie-Catherine Klarkowski came up with the idea for herself and her ten assistants after visiting an Oktoberfest event featuring barmaids in revealing ‘dirndls’. Klarkowski said: “The most important thing is to take away patients’ fear. The sight of clean-up gets patients nervous teeth and gums so parted from the pain rather quickly. ‘Some patients’ mouths are already wide open on entering the practice.’ The Relax & Smile practice in Munich has reportedly seen a rise of a third in its number of clients - all men - since the change.

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**‘Meet the Dentist’**

Davidson County dentists and Davidson County School Readiness and Smart Start programs in America will hold ‘Meet the Dentist’ activities at Davidson County libraries in February for preschool children and their parents. Like the UK’s own version of oral health month activities, these annual celebrations raise awareness about the importance of maintaining good oral health.

Developing good habits at an early age helps children gain a good start on a lifetime of healthy teeth and gums so dentists and their staff will provide dental education for children and parents, dental screening and referral, and free toothbrushes.