**HIV scare for thousands of patients**

Thousands of patients in Bristol and Bournemouth have been informed they could be infected with HIV or hepatitis because a dentist failed to sterilize his instruments properly.

He has been suspended pending an investigation by the General Dental Council.

In Bristol, 5,000 patients, who were treated at the two surgeries while the dentist was there, have been sent letters.

Director of public health at NHS South Gloucestershire, Dr Chris Payne, said that the risk is “very very low” and added that there has never been a documented case in the UK of bloodborne viruses being passed from one patient to another in a dental practice.

In the letter to patients he said that infection ‘can only happen in the rare event that a small amount of infected blood from one person gets into the bloodstream of another patient and the risk of this happening in dental care is very low indeed.’

Health bosses have refused to name the dentist, who has now retired, or the other surgeries in Bournemouth.

NHS Bournemouth and Poole has defended its decision to wait months before alerting patients that they could have been exposed to HIV or hepatitis.

It claimed that it had taken some time to identify patients who were potentially at risk and if it had contacted patients sooner, tests may have missed infections, which can incubate in the body for up to six months.

In another HIV-related case, allegations were made back in April that a dentist has been treating patients in south London despite being HIV positive.

General Dental Council rules mean that the dentist was legally obliged to inform bosses of his illness.

---

**Talking politics**

How much more turbulence can NHS dentistry really take? Neil Kathori discusses the recently revealed Tory party pledges.

**Dream creation**

There will always be a debate between having an existing practice and constructing a new build from the ground up.

**Recession proof**

If you need to look at the fundamental concepts that every practice owner needs to focus on in 2009, this is for you.

**Canal problems**

Do you know whether the whole root canal in question appears patent or sclerosed? Jonathan Murgraff has the answers.