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DH guidance ‘logistical nightmare’

N HS dentists in England are calling for extra funding to help them implement the decontamination guidance issued by the Department of Health.

Dentists at the Local Dental Committees’ (LDC) annual conference voiced their concerns over the extra time, extra staff and extra equipment needed to implement HTM 01-05.

The Department of Health produced this guidance in response to emerging evidence around the effectiveness of decontamination in primary care dental practices and the possibility of prion transmission through protein contamination of dental instruments.

The guidance for dentists in England was published online in April.

All NHS dentists have 12 months to implement HTM 01-05, from when they receive the hard copy of the guidance, which should be with all dentists over the next couple of months.

Dentists in Wales will also adopt 01-05 with a few modifications of the terminology. But Scotland has decided not to follow the guidance.

Lesley Derry, head of education and standards at the British Dentists Association (BDA), who spoke at the LDC conference said: ‘At the moment, Scotland has just cleaning protocols in place and this may be less arduous but I don’t think Scotland is getting much of an easier time.’

Under Scottish guidance, all dentists in Scotland have to have a Local Decontamination Unit in place by the end of the year. They are being given grants of around £20,000 to help them do this.

However, a Scottish dentist at the conference revealed that there are currently 55 dental practices in Glasgow facing closure as they are unable to comply with this, as they do not have the space.

Jason Stokes from Norfolk LDC called for the Government to offer dentists in England similar financial help.

‘The Department of Health needs to offer funding to primary care trusts (PCTs) to help dentists implement 01-05. If it wants to see more patient safety, we want to see extra funding,’ he said.

While Vijay Sudra of Birmingham LDC claimed that the guidance will create ‘chaos’ and leave dentists with a ‘logistical nightmare’.

Under the guidance, all dentists will have to have an overarching infection control policy. So if a dentist gets a new piece of equipment, he or she will have to show how it will be cleaned.

All practices will have to have a rota in place detailing how all the areas in the dental practices are cleaned. The guidance also stipulates that single use instruments are used wherever possible.

Ms Derry said: ‘These are national guidelines but PCTs will be able to adapt them as they see suitable.’

John Milne, chair of the BDA’s General Dental Practice Committee, also spoke and said he had been in discussion with the Health Minister Ann Keen expressing his concern about the guidance and detailing the problems that dental professionals will have implementing the decontamination guidance.

The full guidance can be accessed online at http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_089245

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