How clean is your practice?

Strict guidelines must be followed when it comes to infection control and decontamination of instruments, so it makes sense to get into a sensible cleaning routine, says Richard Musgrave

A clean space

Decontamination is a major step in battling infections and it is advised that it takes place in a dedicated area within which the separate clean and dirty areas are clearly defined. Where possible, it is also advised that instruments should be decontaminated away from the surgery room. Instruments heavily contaminated with oral and other bodily fluids should first be thoroughly cleaned, either by hand in an ultrasonic bath, or by using an instrument washer/disinfector. Instruments must then be sterilised using an autoclave within which temperatures should reach 154-157 °C for three minutes. After decontamination, instruments must be stored in dry, covered conditions.

Additionally, The Dental Council’s Code of Practice relating to Infection Control suggests that to facilitate good working practices and prevent cross contamination, clear zoning within the treatment area should take place. This includes a simple process of defining what areas will become contaminated during procedures and makes effective infection control easily achievable. The HTM 01-05 states that work surfaces, dental chairs, curing lamps, inspection lights, hand controls, trolleys, spittoons and aspirators should be cleaned between patients using a suitable product.

Patient safety

An effective cleaning routine between patients not only satisfies Government guidelines, but also ensures that patients realise their safety is of paramount importance to the dental professional and the other surgery team members. Indeed, “implementing safe and realistic infection control procedures requires the full compliance of the whole dental team.” What’s more, “these procedures should be regularly monitored during clinical sessions and discussed at practice meetings.”

However, establishing the correct manner in which to implement this cleaning routine can be difficult. With so many products on the market, it can be tough making a choice about which one to trust.

Decontamination is a major step in battling infections

Achieving the optimum levels of cleanliness and controlling infections is important to dental professionals seeking to maintain a standard of care for patients and in turn, stay in business: “Failure to employ adequate methods of cross-infection control would almost certainly render a dentist liable to a charge of serious misconduct.” Dentists must ensure that their entire dental team carry out effective cleaning practices to comply with the HTM 01-05 guidelines, and that in turn their patients are satisfied with the standards of care implemented in their practice.

Face the consequence

Threats of infection are always upon us, and infection cannot be completely prevented. The general public hear horror stories from the newspaper pages about infections such as Swine Flu or MRSA and are therefore understandably concerned over the possible dangers previously, and understandably, concerned over the possible dangers that could result from visiting the dentist. Health care practices and dental professionals cannot afford to take a risk and should ensure that their methods and processes are up to standard immediately. Make sure that you are using the correct decontamination products, today – or face the consequences.

References


About the author

Richard Musgrave is responsible for the UK market with his acclaimed infection control training division.