Waste management matters
Louise Finn discusses the high level of medical waste in the UK

There is a significant quantity of hazardous waste that must be disposed of with care.

We’re all aware of waste, whether it’s tucked into our own household wheelie bins or litter dropped in the street.

However, while an empty crisp packet may be unnoticeably, it’s unlikely to trigger an epidemic. Household waste accounts for only one tonne in every seven produced in the UK, and among the commercial waste is a significant quantity of ‘hazardous waste’ from healthcare premises which must be disposed of with great care to eliminate any risk to the public or the environment. As responsible dental professionals we need to understand and observe the regulations concerning both the biodegradable and inorganic waste generated by our practices, seeking to minimise our practice’s waste product footprint.

The optimum waste solution is of course recycling, with organic material the prime candidate to attempt to reduce atmospherically damaging methane emissions, but in many instances Government regulations prohibit this option for both medical detritus and potentially contaminated obsolete equipment.

The Environment Agency has designed a website where businesses are listed according to sector and their responsibilities defined. Practice Principals and clinicians should already be aware of these, but downloading the relevant protocol is a simple expedient to ensure this awareness is shared by every number of staff. Stated the highest standards of health and safety are maintained in respect of waste throughout the practice.

Individual businesses each have a ‘duty of care’ to safely manage their own ‘controlled waste,’ defined as being any by-products of their commercial or other activities which pose a potential risk to humans.

Controlled waste must be handled by an authorised contractor, and its source must be traceable, so it’s vital to maintain and retain the paperwork covering waste transfer whenever it leaves the practice. Keeping waste disposal records is a legal requirement, and any failure in this regard can lead to prosecution.

Healthcare waste which is destined for landfill must be pre-treated (washed and disinfected) before tipping, and when this is not practical or treatment being replaced by upgrades, websites such as ‘Free Cycle’ have emerged as an advertising medium for unwanted items and other household electrical goods whose working life is not yet exhausted.

Dentists seeking to dispose of unwanted or superseded electrical equipment have particular problems. Although recycling is the ideal way to eliminate liability to landfill tax, this is not always practical, and it can seem prolific, even immoral, to scrap a perfectly functioning, sophisticated machine in favour of the latest version or simply because of a cause of policy change.

While there may be occasions when approaching an overseas dental charity represents a satisfying solution, there will be others when for fiscal, financial or logistical considerations this is not appropriate – and the guidelines for safe disposal take no account of the practice budget!

Many practices, prudently taking heed of the present economic climate, are today pursuing the pursuit of modernity and efficiency cannot be guaranteed. Dental equipment is covered by the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) directive. In the domestic market, where the pursuit of modernity and perpetual upgrading has become a way of life for many, household appliances such as kettles or toasters bought before August 2005 can be returned to the manufacturer when a replacement unit is purchased.

For domestic appliances acquired after August 2005 the manufacturer should also provide a protocol for disposal of the old unit. With so many still serviceable domestic items

---

**The Implant Course** - advanced training & mentoring
The Implant Course is a structured programme of clinical study delivered through a series of interactive lectures, seminars, hands-on training live-surgery and monitored clinical treatment.
- Little or no experience in implant dentistry
- Hands-on training and live surgery
- Mentored clinical treatment in your own practice
- The only course designed exclusively to programme for the new regulations to replace Category B waste (now Category D) with category A waste, taught by one of the first in the UK to receive this diploma
- Additional practical and theoretical knowledge embedded (worth £2000.00 RRP)

£5995+vat
*London May 2011 & Manchester October 2012*

---

**The RESTORATIVE course** - advanced training & mentoring
Master and Develop new skills helping you to expand your treatment planning and hands on skills. The RESTORATIVE course
- Occlusal and Treatment Planning
- Minimal Intervention to Full Coverage Restorations
- Smile Design, Aesthetic Milestones
- Advanced Treatment Planning, Implants and Cosmetic Finals

4 x 3 day modules at £325+vat per day
*Starts: April 2011 (020 8251 0405)*

---

**The PREP course** - hands on restorative training
- Direct and indirect Composites
- Posts - direct cast and new all ceramic
- Bracket Analogues and Occlusion Cups
- Full Coverage Crowns
- Minimal Intervention and bonding
- Verona Preparation of preexisted Contour preparations and retreatments
- Conversion and Maryland bridge preparation
- Lab communication and critique

8 day course £325+vat per day
*Starts: March 2011 (020 8251 0405)*

---

**Hands on UPDATE FOR DENTAL THERAPISTS course**
A two day hands on information session for dental therapists, the format of the day will start off with an interactive seminar to get everyone up to speed with all the new developments, both with materials and techniques in the field of crowns, and restorations
- PreFormable Dental Bonding
- Anterior Aesthetics and Composites
- Minimal Intervention and Crown management
- Whittling update
- Minimal Intervention and bonding
- Dental photography - integrating clinical photography into daily practice

£195+vat per day
*March 21st & March 22nd 2011*

---

Visit [www.advanceddentaleducation.co.uk](http://www.advanceddentaleducation.co.uk) tel: 0845 604 6448 for further details

---

**References**

---

**About the author**
Louise Finn is the Director of Dental Stock Schemes
For more information visit [www.dentalsstocksrhm.gr.co.uk](http://www.dentalsstocksrhm.gr.co.uk)