Here are some of the most frequently asked questions on compliance:

**HTM 01-05 is advisory, do I have to comply?**

The legal stuff is in the Health Act 2006. This act, which is the law, lays down compliance criterion which have to be implemented either through HTM 01-05 or through another method which you can prove to an inspecting body is just as effective as HTM 01-05. Do you have such a method? If not then you should implement HTM 01-05.

**What’s the difference between Essential Requirements and Best Practice?**

Surprisingly little. Best Practice says that you should replace manual cleaning with a washer disinfector, that your storage and record keeping should be of a better standard, allowing traceability, and that you should have a separate decontamination area. Once you’ve seen the problems associated with the full manual cleaning procedure you may well surmise that it’s easier and cheaper to buy a washer disinfector. You don’t yet need to comply with Best Practice but you should have a written plan to show how you are going to move towards it, and you should implement Best Practice wherever possible.

**Do I have to use a washer disinfector?**

No, but it is best practice and strongly recommended. If you don’t then you should comply with the full manual washing procedure in HTM 01-05 3.16 (assuming you don’t have an alternative method that satisfies the inspecting body, see above). Compliance to this procedure is difficult and time consuming. Do you constantly monitor the water temperature with a non-mercury thermometer? Use only a single use long handled brush? Clean each instrument and then inspect each one under an illuminated magnifying source? Are you rinsing with RO or distilled water? Check the full procedure in Section 3.16 and decide if you can or want to implement this. Beware, non-compliant manual cleaning is rife.

**Do I have to use a vacuum autoclave?**

Read Section 4. If you are sterilising lumened, wrapped, or pouched instruments then it’s pretty clear that you should. Seek and apply manufacturer’s advice.

**Do I need to have a full decontamination room?**

No, it is ideal but if for practical reasons you cannot then HTM 01-05 does not insist upon it.

**What tests do I have to perform on my decontamination equipment?**

There are daily, weekly, quarterly, and annual checks and tests on the performance of your equipment that must be carried out and documented. The required standards are detailed in HTM 01-05, Section 5. Seek further advice.

**How should I treat my hand pieces?**

Section 2 makes it clear that you should clean and sterilise after each patient. From a practical point of view you may want to consider a dedicated hand piece steriliser because washer disinfectors may degrade the performance of your hand pieces.

For further advice call Prestige Medical on 01254 844 103 or email sales@prestigemedical.co.uk.