

Dentistry's Newsletter for Infection Control and Safety

Special Series on Circumstances

Our series of topics for this year is designed to help you with infection control and safety by addressing some different circumstances that can occur in the office. The first issue is "So you just became the Office Safety Coordinator—What do you do now?" This will be followed by "When Stuff Happens", "Exceptional Patients", "Bringing the Outside In", "High Tech Infection Control" and "Frequently Asked Questions".

So you just became the Office Safety Coordinator — What do you do now?

The Office Safety Coordinator (OSC) is a person identified to coordinate various office activities that help protect patients and office staff from harmful situations and help ensure compliance with related regulations and recommendations.

You may be assigned to the position of OSC if the office decides to revamp its safety program, or if there is a related staff change, or if a new office is being set up. This position (often held by a dental assistant or office manager) is challenging and very important in regard to the safety of everyone in the office and relates to compliance with regulations and key recommendations. The duties may involve infection control, management of hazardous materials, fire prevention, radiation and electrical safety, and management of non-medical emergencies and office evacuation procedures.

General Duties of the OSC

The main categories of the OSC's duties are given here with details presented on page 3 "Putting It All Together" and page 4 "Communicate and Educate".

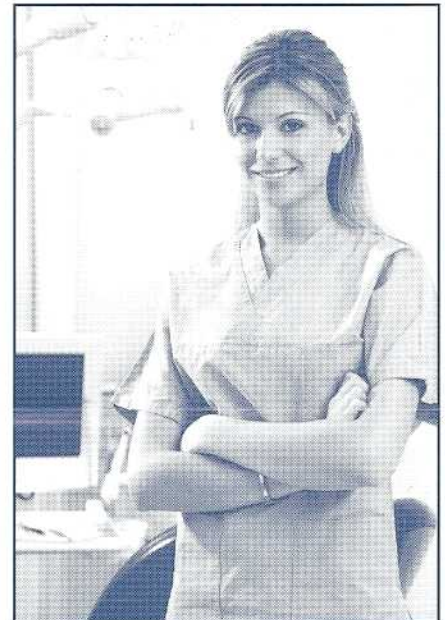
- Obtain/prepare/update required safety documents, plans and records
- Obtain/prepare other beneficial safety documents
- Ensure proper and timely training of new, regular, janitorial, and temporary staff
- Help establish a culture of safety in the office
- Ensure proper availability, functioning and maintenance of infection control, haz-com and other safety supplies, equipment and procedures

Continued on page 2

Learning Objectives

After reading this article, the reader should be able to:

- ▶ define the position of a dental Office Safety Coordinator.
- ▶ describe the types of training/knowledge beneficial to an Office Safety Coordinator.
- ▶ describe ways to disseminate information to the rest of the office staff.
- ▶ list the duties of an Office Safety Coordinator.



Contents

1. Topic Overview
Learning Objectives
2. Topic Overview (continued)
3. Putting It All Together
4. Communicate and Educate
Around the World
What are Your "Bright Ideas"?
5. What's Wrong With This Picture?
Did You Know?
Sponsors
6. Roadmap to OSAP
Links to Resources
Glossary
7. Continuing Education
8. Bright Ideas

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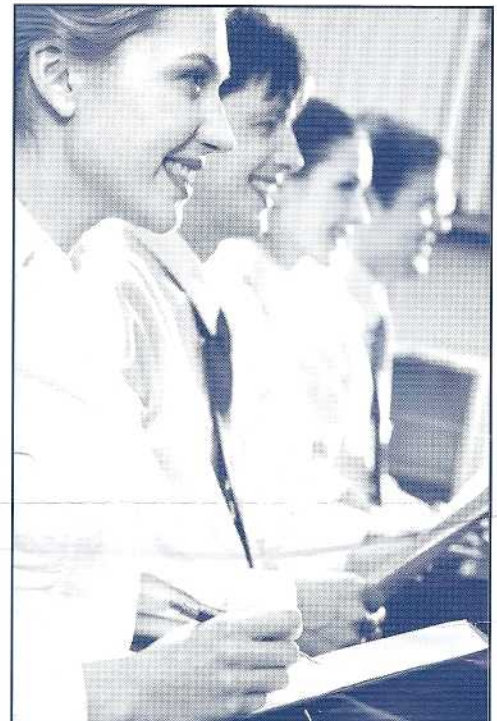
So you just became the Office Safety Coordinator — What do you do now?

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Training

The OSC is frequently one who has the most training and/or experience with safety procedures. However, extra training may be needed or be beneficial at the time of appointment to the position. Helpful knowledge includes:

- an understanding of basic microbiology and general dental procedures.
- modes of infectious diseases spread in the office.
- infection control and other safety procedures.
- familiarity with OSHA's (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) Bloodborne Pathogens and Hazard Communication Standards,^{1,2} the CDC's infection control recommendations for dentistry,³ and other rules related to fire prevention and emergency evacuations⁴.
- communication and computer skills.
- organizational skills.



The OSC and OSAP

The OSC should be a member of OSAP which is the premier educational resource for dental office safety. See the "Roadmap to OSAP" on p.6 for further information. The OSC can turn to OSAP for:

- current safety information, regulations and recommendations.
- educational materials (e.g., textbooks, workbooks, video tapes, posters, guidelines, charts, Web links, newsletters, on-line forum).
- information on suppliers and manufacturers of infection control and safety supplies and equipment.
- interaction with other OSCs and with infection control and safety experts.
- live infection control presentations and product displays at the annual symposium (June 11-14, 2009, Dallas).
- much more.

Infection Control In Practice is a resource prepared for clinicians by the Organization for Safety & Asepsis Procedures (OSAP) with the assistance and expertise of its members. OSAP is a nonprofit, independent organization providing information and education on infection control and occupational health and safety to dental care settings worldwide. *Infection Control In Practice* is published six times per year and is a trademark belonging to OSAP. OSAP assumes no liability for actions taken based on information herein.

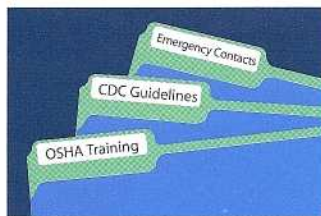
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Putting It All Together

Examples of the Office Safety Coordinator Duties.

1. Obtain/prepare/update OSHA-required safety documents, plans and records.

- Obtain a copy of OSHA's Bloodborne Pathogens¹ and Haz-Com² standards and OSHA's "Job Safety and Health, It's the Law" poster⁵.
- Prepare and update the OSHA-required written Exposure Control Plan, Hazard Communication Program, Material Safety Data Sheets, list of hazardous chemicals, Emergency Action Plan.
- Maintain records on OSHA training, spore-testing, regulated waste disposal; equipment maintenance.
- Ensure staff medical records are being kept.
- Maintain sterilization records for the length of time required in your jurisdiction.
- Ensure X-ray equipment certifications are up to date.
- Ensure all those taking X-rays are properly qualified/certified.



2. Obtain/prepare other beneficial documents.

- Obtain a copy of CDC's infection control guidelines for dentistry. Prepare a TB infection control plan.
- Ensure the maintenance of employee health records recommended by the CDC.
- Develop CDC-recommended evaluations of the office's infection control procedures.
- Prepare a list of emergency contacts to help manage staff injuries, sterilizer failures, supplies/instrument/utility problems or repairs.

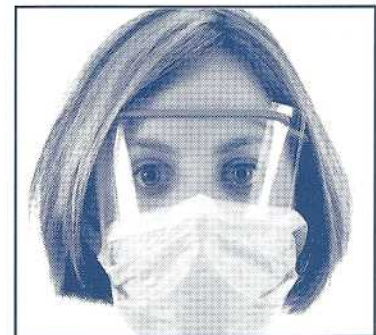
3. Ensure proper and timely training of new, regular, janitorial, and temporary staff.

- Ensure cleaning crews and temps have received the proper blood-borne pathogens and hazardous chemicals training.
- Make sure temporary office help know where infection control supplies and important safety materials are located (e.g., MSDSs, eyewash stations).
- Ensure training records are updated.

4. Help establish and maintain a "culture of safety" in the office⁶.

- Monitor/evaluate safety procedures and compliance with regulations.
- Promote individual accountability for the safety of all in the office.
- Maintain a bulletin board for notices, posters, signs and other reminders to enhance office safety awareness and change the postings regularly.
- Manage/describe any evaluations of safety devices performed and place information in the OSHA Exposure Control Plan.
- Reinforce procedures for post-exposure medical evaluations and review of exposure incidents.
- Post signs in the sterilization area to prevent the intermingling of sterile and contaminated packages.
- Replace sharps containers when they are ¾ full and prepare regulated waste containers for disposal or pick-up by the medical waste hauler.
- Ensure proper handling of contaminated laundry.
- Ensure the decontamination of items received from the dental lab.
- Ensure proper labeling of hazardous waste containers and hazardous chemicals.
- Ensure proper maintenance of smoke alarms and fire extinguishers and periodically monitor the integrity of all electric cords.

- Ensure a mechanism for soliciting ideas from the staff for safety improvement and for reporting safety problems.
- Hold emergency fire/evacuation drills.
- Make sure exit signs/lights are posted.
- Ensure no hazardous chemicals are being stored in office refrigerators, and post appropriate signs.



5. Ensure proper availability, functioning and maintenance of infection control, haz-com and other safety supplies, equipment and procedures.

- Evaluate, select and maintain the stock of supplies and equipment needed to maintain office safety.
- Ensure routine maintenance/cleaning (as described by the manufacturer) on sterilizers, sonic cleaners, washers/disinfectors.
- Ensure proper functioning of eyewash stations and (if present) safety showers.
- Check reusable heavy utility gloves and heat resistant gloves for cracks, tears and worn places.
- Replace empty soap dispensers (wash reusable dispensers before refilling).
- Sterilize, or disinfect or at least clean equipment to be shipped for repair and ensure proper labeling of any contaminated parts.

Communicate and Educate

How do you develop a "culture of safety"?

Communication is important in any business, and in a dental office the OSC plays a key role in disseminating information to the boss, the rest of the staff and sometimes to patients.

One of the very important roles of the OSC is to keep the others in the office informed about changes in procedures, regulations and recommendations, products, equipment, safety techniques and new hazardous chemicals in the office. While this is commonly done in staff meetings, sometimes things come up that require immediate notification such as a detected sterilization failure or a "boil water" notice from the department of health. It's also very important for all in the office to be continuously



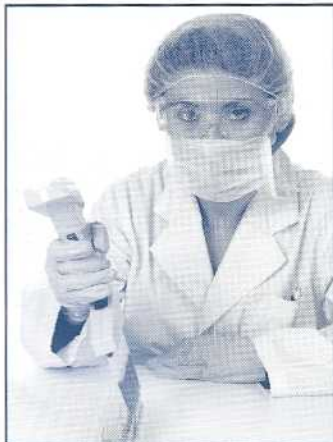
mindful of office safety. While it's good that infection control procedures become routine, the downside is the risk of developing complacency. For example one might say, "I don't see why we have to keep placing these chemical indicators in every package day after day." Well, it's true that sterilization failures don't occur very frequently, but when they do, it's very important to detect them as quickly as possible, and chemical indicators can help with this. So, visual and verbal forms of communication about safety help fight complacency, and not only include the careful handling of sharps and hazardous chemicals, but also include reminders in other areas as described above to develop a "culture of safety" in the office. See "Bright Ideas" on page 8.

Around the World



We hear a lot about the common cold, strep throat, the flu, TB, and malaria, but there are numerous other more rare infectious diseases still occurring around the world. The following summarizes the epidemiology of some of these diseases that were reported to the World Health Organization during the first 9 months of 2008.

There have been thousands of cases of dengue and dengue hemorrhagic fever in Brazil. In Iraq, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau 507 cases of cholera were reported. Hand, foot and mouth disease, first recognized in 1970, occurred in about 3,000 people in China.



Forty cases of human avian influenza (H5N1) have occurred in Indonesia, Egypt, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Vietnam and China. The 49 cases of yellow fever reported from Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Central African Republic, Liberia, Paraguay and Brazil have prompted large scale vaccination programs. Rift Valley fever that emerged in Africa in the late 1980s has been reported this year in Madagascar and Sudan. In July a case of Marburg hemorrhagic fever was reported in a resident of The Netherlands who had just visited Uganda. The Marburg virus is a relative of the Ebola virus both of which are quite deadly.

Also in 2008 a newly described arenavirus was identified as the cause of 4 infections (with 3 deaths) in Zambia and South Africa. Arenaviruses are generally associated with rodent-transmitted disease causing hemorrhagic fevers. This new virus, along with other known arenaviruses like Lassa and Machupo viruses, has also been associated with person-to-person spread and nosocomial infections.

What are your "Bright Ideas"?

Sometimes the simplest changes to daily routine can make a big difference! What changes or ideas have you implemented in your office or clinic to make it easier to comply with infection control and safety procedures?

Do you have a bright idea about infection control/safety you'd like to share with us?

Email it to office@osap.org and be sure to include your contact information, a 10-word description of your title and role, and a jpeg photo (if you choose).

or,
fax your "bright idea" to OSAP at
1-410-571-0028.

What's Wrong With This Picture?

Take this photo challenge and see if you can readily identify the breach in aseptic procedure and safety in this photo. Challenge your knowledge first before checking your answers below!



- ANSWERS:
- (1) Patient is not wearing safety glasses.
 - (2) Dental assistant is not wearing safety glasses with side shield.
 - (3) Dentist and dental assistant are not wearing face masks and their forearms are not covered.
 - (4) Dental assistant is wearing jewelry that is exposed.

Did You Know?

Did you know that OSHA advises each work site handling hazardous chemicals to designate a person (such as the OSC) to help manage the Hazard Communication Program? Appendix E of the Hazard Communication Standard (HCS)⁷ states: "In order to have a successful program, it will be necessary to assign responsibility for both the initial and ongoing activities that have to be undertaken to comply with the rule". Also, the Directive that OSHA inspectors use to determine compliance with the HCS⁸ states that citations be given if there is no designation of person(s) responsible for:

- ▶ ensuring the labeling of containers of hazardous chemicals;
- ▶ ensuring the labeling of containers used to ship hazardous chemicals;
- ▶ obtaining/maintaining Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS);
- ▶ conducting the required HCS training.

This alone provides a pretty strong incentive for each office to have an OSC.

OSHA

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