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## Practice Inspection Assistance

### Some Useful Tips to Check YOUR Practice for Compliance



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The safety of your dental staff including that of your own is naturally of paramount importance, but do you all comply and just how seriously do you take it? I refer here to (PPE) Personal Protective Equipment and the wearing of it?

***The Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992***, states: “employers **MUST** provide protective equipment where it is necessary to ensure safe systems of work”

Employees cannot therefore be made to pay for their own PPE or to have it cleaned or pay for its replacement should it become damaged or lost, this cost is to be borne by the employer. Further all PPE must carry the CE mark to indicate that it has been tested and compliant with UK standards. Surprisingly’ protective clothing **CAN** minimise the risk at work, although it is not a substitute for more basic measures. I used the word ‘surprisingly’, as it is becoming more and more the norm I’m afraid, that protective clothing, although worn most dental staff within the practice often escapes the necessity of the dentist to conform also, as my regular visits to numerous dental practices has revealed. The trend these days with some dental practices lean toward the casual approach by dressing in every day domestic clothing, rather than concentrating upon working to reduce the risk of cross infection by the wearing of protective clothing. It seems that an emphasis is placed more upon putting the patients nerves at ease, (or so I’m told) (although I think some dentists see it as more business orientated) rather than protection of their own well being or that of their patients, not to mention the practitioners own family members when the same clothing are worn home? Needless to say, protective clothing is advised and clinically should be worn

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without exception when in the surgery or laboratory. Likewise, they should be removed, when going into an eating area whilst at work and work clothing should remain at work unless taken home to be laundered!

### **Eye Protection**

Those working in close proximity to the patient during treatment should wear eye protection. Eyewear should have **FULL LENSES** and **SIDE PROTECTORS**, as normal half lenses or spectacles (worn by dental staff or the patients to correct vision), do not provide enough protection against splatter and projectiles from the mouth, for example, tooth and amalgam particles. Further, to protect the patient's eyes from the bright overhead light, tinted glasses should be provided over those that do not to prevent light blindness. The patients wearing of protective glasses should not be an option, **IT'S A MUST DO**, or a risk of prosecution could exist against the dentist as a breach in their DUTY of CARE should an eye injury occur?

### **FURNISHINGS**

When the topic of furnishings is mentioned within a practice for the purpose of a health and safety concerns, there is a need to separate furnishings into three (3) categories. Firstly there are the furnishings within the surgery, secondly the furnishings that exist and used by the patients (usually within the patient's waiting rooms and those provided and used by staff within their rest areas), and thirdly the office furnishings i.e. the desks and chairs. It is therefore easiest to break furnishings down these three categories down further and then to deal with each one in turn.

#### ***The Checks that you can do!***

**Firstly:** Surgery Furnishings should be in good condition, without tears in the dental chair materials exposing the foam or stuffing's. Such faults can lead to a risk of bacteria growing or even cross infection concerns.

Dentists and nurse's chairs or stools should be ergonomically designed to prevent back injuries or strains, by providing support to the middle back or designed to promote a good sitting posture whilst working.

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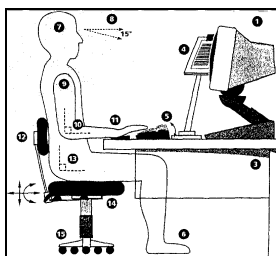
All too often, the dentist's stool is far superior in design to that of the nurses, when in fact it's the poor nurse who generally has to contort her posture more during the day whilst assisting the dentist, than the dentist does themselves.

**Secondly:** Soft furnishings found generally within the patients waiting room and in the staff rooms, MUST be manufactured and or have been tested to be Fire Resistance and should bear the label to signify this. Furnishings that do not conform to this standard should be discarded and replaced with furnishings that do comply with these Fire regulatory standards.

**Fridges** are a **common cause** for concern within a practice, and all too often contain dental products as well as the staff food, i.e. sandwiches and milk and quite often a range of other foodstuff. As you may appreciate, to do this does contravene food hygiene regulations. It is recommended therefore that a separate fridge be used for the storage of dental products to that of the fridge used to refrigerate foodstuffs.

**Thirdly:** Office furniture, namely chairs used for users of Display Screen Equipment (computers) and computer terminals are governed by the *THE HEALTH & SAFETY (DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT) REGULATIONS 1992 (as amended 2002)*.

These regulations require a suitable and sufficient analysis of workstations to be carried out of 'users' of display screens. The guidance on these regulations advises that those who use a computer for approx an hour or more continuously should be considered a 'user'



Anyone working with computers and visual display equipment will be provided with work areas suitable for the purpose.

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This will include sufficient and comfortable conditions including: sufficient work area, adjustable seating and footrest if necessary and suitable lighting to help reduce eyestrain, headaches and back or upper limb problems.

In addition anyone designated, as a "User" of Display Screen Equipment will be provided, if requested, with eye tests at regular intervals and suitable eye wear for Display Screen use, if necessary, as prescribed by an optician approved by the employer. A Risk assessment should also be conducted on the workstation in cooperation with the user and the findings acted upon.

### **Conclusion**

Safety within the workplace is the concern of us all, although the largest liability rests on the shoulders of the employer. If you are in any doubt that your practice is compliant then we at **Safety Priorities** would be only too pleased discuss your concerns over the phone and to discuss with you **OUR** ongoing 3year contract package.

Be safe!

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