INFECTION CONTROL INFORMATION

March 2004

INFECTION CONTROL PRODUCT EVALUATORS

DIS will be starting several infection control product evaluations in the next month and is looking for dentists in the federal services (e.g., USAF, USA, USN, PHS, VA, USCG) to participate in the clinical-user evaluations. The product will be mailed to interested clinicians along with the questionnaires and a cover letter describing the evaluation process. DIS is primarily interested in whether you liked or disliked the way the product handled and its various features. After using the product for a period of approximately three months, each evaluator completes a questionnaire and returns the questionnaire to DIS. If the item being evaluated is a piece of equipment, it needs to be returned to DIS or the manufacturer. If the item is a material or other type of consumable, it does not. DIS then takes the results and generates a final report for our Web site and the manufacturer. Many of our evaluators have told us they really enjoy being involved in the process. It gives them a chance to use state-of-the-art materials and equipment at no cost to their clinics. They also have said they like having a chance to give their opinions about the new products they are trying.

If you are a **dentist** in the federal services (e.g., USAF, USA, USN, PHS, VA, USCG) and would like to participate in infection control product evaluation please email me at jennifer.harte@ndri.med.navy.mil.

CDC DENTAL INFECTION CONTROL GUIDELINES CONTINUING EDUCATION

The CDC *Guidelines for Infection Control in Dental Health-Care Settings, 2003* are now available at www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/infectioncontrol as well as on the DIS Web site. Federal dental service personnel can earn 2 hours of continuing education by successfully completing the test on the DIS Web site at: www.brooks.af.mil/dis/infcontrol.htm.

NEW INFECTION CONTROL PRODUCTS

New and innovative products are marketed each month and DIS is unable to evaluate all of them. Because DIS has not had the opportunity to evaluate these products, **we cannot confirm manufacturers' claims** about them. If you would like additional information about the products or are interested in evaluating them please visit http://www.brooks.af.mil/dis/newproducts.htm or the manufacturer's Web site for more information on the following products.

- **SlimKey MD keyboard** (IKEY, www.ikey.com)

- **Miltex Disposable Safety Scalpel** (Miltex, www.miltex.com / government pricing is available from www.americandepot.com)

- **Vacusol™ Ultra** (Biotrol, www.biotrol.com)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Preventing Contamination of Digital Radiology Sensors (3/04)

Question: Is it better to barrier-protect digital radiology sensors or disinfect them between each patient?

Answer: Digital radiography sensors come into contact with mucous membranes and are considered semicritical devices. Ideally, therefore they should be cleaned and heat-sterilized or high-level disinfected between patients. At this time, however, there are no sensors that can withstand heat sterilization or

complete immersion in a high-level disinfectant. These devices should, at a minimum, be barrier protected by using an FDA-cleared barrier to reduce gross contamination during use. However, use of a barrier does not always protect from contamination. One study determined that a brand of commercially available plastic barriers used to protect dental digital radiography sensors failed at a substantial rate (44%). This rate dropped to 6% when latex finger cots were used in conjunction with the plastic barrier. To minimize the potential for patient cross-contamination, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends cleaning and disinfecting the sensor with an EPA-registered intermediate-level (tuberculocidal) disinfectant after removing the barrier and before use on another patient. Because the sensors and associated computer components vary by manufacturer and are expensive, manufacturers should be consulted regarding specific disinfection products and procedures.

Selected References:

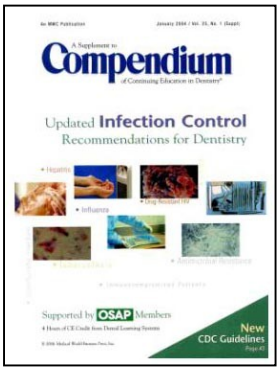
CDC. Guidelines for infection control in dental health-care settings – 2003. MMWR 2003; 52(No. RR-17):1–66.

Hokett SD, Honey JR, Ruiz F, Baisden MK, Hoen MM. Assessing the effectiveness of direct digital radiography barrier sheaths and finger cots. J Am Dent Assoc 2000;131:463–467.

FROM THE LITERATURE

Infection Control Review

Updated Infection Control Recommendations for Dentistry. Compend Contin Educ Dent 2004 Jan;25 (1 Suppl):1–55.



In this special supplement to the *Compendium of Continuing Education in Dentistry* various authors provide background information on the recently published CDC *Guidelines for Infection Control in Dental Health-Care Settings, 2003* in six separate articles. The history and evolution of published infection control guidelines, the importance of hand hygiene, and the application of vaccinations as an effective prevention strategy for health-care personnel are discussed. Additional articles review instrument reprocessing and sterilization methods, environmental surface infection control, and frequently asked infection control questions.

DIS Comment: The article *Current Concepts in Hand Hygiene* discusses the importance of hand hygiene as the foundation for an effective infection control program. Routine handwashing, hand antisepsis, and surgical hand antisepsis procedures are reviewed. The article concludes with a section emphasizing the importance of education and involvement of the staff in evaluating and selecting new products, as they become available. *An Immunization Program for Dental Practices* emphasizes the need and importance of a written, comprehensive policy for immunizing workers. A thorough review of the hepatitis B vaccine is presented, as well as a discussion of the importance of annual vaccination against influenza. A reprint of the table of recommended immunizations for dental health-care personnel is also included. *Sterilization Update 2003* is a comprehensive review of instrument processing from cleaning to sterilization and storage. A review of new advances in automated cleaning equipment and advances in pre-vacuum and post-vacuum steam sterilizers is also presented. *Environmental Surface Infection Control, 2003* reinforces basic concepts of cleaning and disinfecting as well as addressing the routine use of disposable barrier covers.