Summary of Infection Prevention Practices in Dental Settings

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

ABSTRACT

Transmission of infectious agents among patients and dental health care personnel in dental settings is rare. However, from 2003 to 2015, transmissions in dental settings have been documented. In most cases, investigations failed to link a specific lapse of infection prevention and control with a particular transmission. These reports highlight the need for comprehensive training to improve understanding of underlying principles, recommended practices, their implementation, and the conditions that have to be met for disease transmission. Developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), this document is a summary guide of basic infection prevention recommendations for all dental health care settings. This Disinfectant Digest will focus specifically on sterilization and disinfection of patient-care items and devices as well as environmental infection prevention and control.

Key Recommendations for Sterilization and Disinfection of Patient Care Devices for Dental Settings

1. Clean and reprocess (disinfect or sterilize) reusable dental equipment appropriately before use on another patient.

2. Clean and reprocess reusable dental equipment according to manufacturer instructions. If the manufacturer does not provide such instructions, the device may not be suitable for multi-patient use. a) Have manufacturer instructions for reprocessing reusable dental instruments/equipment readily available, ideally in or near the reprocessing area.

3. Assign responsibilities for reprocessing of dental equipment to dental health care personnel with appropriate training.

4. Wear appropriate PPE when handling and reprocessing contaminated patient equipment.

5. Use mechanical, chemical, and biological monitors according to manufacturer instructions to ensure the effectiveness of the sterilization process. Maintain sterilization records in accordance with state and local regulations.

Key Recommendations for Environmental Infection Prevention and Control in Dental Settings

1. Establish policies and procedures for routine cleaning and disinfection of environmental surfaces in dental health care settings.

a) Use surface barriers to protect clinical contact surfaces, particularly those that are difficult to clean (e.g. switches on dental chairs, computer equipment) and change surface barriers between patients.

b) Cleaning removes large numbers of microorganisms from surfaces and should always precede disinfection.

c) Disinfect clinical contact surfaces that are not barrier protected with an EPA-registered hospital grade disinfectant after each patient.

Use an intermediate level disinfectant (i.e. tuberculocidal claim) if surface is visibly contaminated with blood. Disinfectant products should not be used as cleaners unless the label indicates the product is suitable for such use.

2. Select EPA-registered disinfectants or detergents/disinfectants with label claims for use in health care settings.

3. Follow manufacturer instructions for use of cleaners and EPA-registered disinfectants (e.g. amount, dilution, contact time, safe use, and disposal).

CONCLUSION

This document includes a concise summary of best practices that covers sterilization and disinfection of patient care devices as well as the cleaning and disinfection of environmental surfaces and noncritical devices encountered throughout the dental office. These recommendations are the basic expectations for safe care within dental facilities and should be implemented into every infection prevention program to protect both patients and staff.