Dental therapy *myths*

I am a Dental Therapist working in a busy Dental Access Centre. It was with despair that I received a questionnaire from a student therapist asking how many 'simple' fillings I complete in a day's work. While I acknowledge that the word 'simple' has been used in various documentation, I feel this one word has caused many members of the dental team to wrongly presume that therapists only carry out small occlusal restorations, and serves to perpetuate the myth that therapists only treat children.

The current situation is that therapists may carry out exactly the same cavity preparation and restoration, on exactly the same teeth, on exactly the same patients as a dental surgeon.

What therapists may not undertake on these teeth are onlays, inlays, root canal treatments and the placement of amalgam retention pins (not that this would be a disadvantage to a therapist when there are good amalgam bonding agents available that negate the need to use pins).

A typical day sees me completing a variety of large multi-surfaced resin bonded amalgams on posterior teeth, and extensive composite restorations of carious/broken down anterior teeth, mainly on adult patients who have been unable to access dental care for a variety of reasons. In addition to this I carry out the full range of a therapist's duties which includes taking radiographs, adminis-

tering block and infiltration local anaesthesia, extracting deciduous teeth etc.

A dental therapist does not need a dental surgeon on the premises while they are working; they must, however, have a written treatment plan for each patient that has been referred to them by a dental surgeon.

Dental therapists have been around for 45 years now; it is time for the dental profession to have a full understanding of what therapists may do, and appreciate what a valuable, highly skilled, and economical member of the team they can be.

Josie Stockley
Dental Therapist
By email

Back splatter with your bagel?

A lot has been written on the topic of infection control, and personally this subject interests me, but I do find that there are a couple of gaps in the documentation. The thoughts and actions of some dental professionals leave a little to be desired, and in particular, the wearing of clinic clothes outside work is one of my bug bears.

I work in an area where there is a high population of dental practices, and after a while you get to know who works in them (it never hurts to network). Sometimes I pop out at lunch and often see dental nurses out and about, still wearing their uniforms.

Our whole practice went to a dental open evening last summer and we were open mouthed when we saw an entire practice turn up in their work clothes. Not only would they be hot and sweaty, but teeming with back splatter and aerosol contamination.

I'd like to quote from a textbook of mine: 'All members of the dental team, including the chair side assistant, hygienist, and dentist, are responsible for maintaining proper infection control techniques ... crucial in infection control is maintaining aseptic techniques...

*'This means employing all forms of washing, sanitising, disinfecting and sterilising of items that come into contact with patients to reduce the likelihood of infection with a contaminant...'*¹

We as dental care professionals, in whatever capacity, have an obligation to protect not only ourselves, but our patients and the general public. The use of gloves, masks, face shields and goggles are intended to protect us from the transmission of the infectious diseases that we have to deal with. Our work uniform is designed as

such a device; I'm sure that these people wouldn't want to walk down to the shops in their other protective equipment.

From what I have seen recently, quite a few dental professionals seem to think that infection control ends when you leave the clinic, which is both sad and worrying.

Julie Wright RDN
Tunbridge Wells

1. Dietz-Bourguignon E. *Safety standards and infection control for dental assistants*. USA: Delmar, 2002.

letters & spotlight

Please **SEND YOUR LETTERS** to:

The Editor,
Vital, BDJ Editorial,
Nature Publishing Group,
4-6 Crinan Street,
London N1 9XW
or email vitaleditorial@nature.com

Write to us for our **autumn 2007** issue and you could be the lucky winner of our **Star Letter** writer competition. You will then be the proud owner of a collection of the latest **Colgate Oral Health Professional** products (£100 RRP), courtesy of Colgate.

Letters may be edited for reasons of space. Opinions expressed in reader letters do not necessarily reflect the opinions or views of the editorial team or the publishers.

spotlight on dental technicians

Below is a list of commercial courses for dental technicians supplied by the Dental Technologists Association (DTA). For information on a career as a dental technician see the DTA's website at www.dta-uk.org or telephone 0870 243 0753.

Bracon

Bracon has a fully functional training laboratory and is able to offer in-house courses on different systems and techniques.

27 July 2007

Sticktech Practical – Etchingham

26 September 2007

Sticktech Practical – Birmingham Dental Hospital

14 November 2007

Sticktech Practical – Etchingham

For further details telephone Judy Mitchell on **01580 817000**.

DBG

CPR update courses for your workplace
(two hours of verifiable CPD)

Infection Control courses for your workplace
(two hours of verifiable CPD)

Radiography Update course
(six hours of verifiable CPD)

For full details telephone **0845 0066112**.

IDEA – International Dental Education Academy

For further information see www.the-idea-centre.com.

Independent seminars

For full details of courses available telephone **0800 371652**, email seminars@fmc.co.uk or see www.independentseminars.com.

Ivoclar Vivadent

For further details telephone the Course Administrator on **0116 284 7887**.

Nobel Biocare

For further information telephone **01895 452912** or see www.nobelbiocare.com.

Osteo-Ti

For further information telephone **01481 241117** or email osteo-ti@guernsey.net or www.osteoti.com.

Panadent

For further information telephone **01689 881788**.

Prestige

Offers courses/presentations on an individual basis on required topics within your own surgery or laboratory environment.

For further details and to join the mailing list telephone **01274 721 567** or email info@prestige-dental.co.uk.

Skillbond

For further details telephone Vincent Purkiss on **01494 448474** or email courses@skillbond.com.

Schottlander

For further details telephone the Course Administrator on **01462 704633**.

Talladium

For further information telephone Gary Marshall on **01580 817001** or email sales@bracon.co.uk.