

A question of standards

Gerard Murray explains the importance of pure water.

In less than two years the health department's HTM 01-05 guidelines on decontamination in primary care dental practices will culminate in the registration of all dental practices, with the Care Quality Commission overseeing the process. Until then, the race is on for dental practices to ensure their decontamination processes are upgraded to meet the standards of quality management and clinical governance that will be required.

One such practice has been The Whitehouse Dental Practice in Southall, London, which recently overhauled its decontamination processes to achieve the high standards required by HTM 01-05.

Sana Movahedi, a dentist at the practice, explained: 'Like most practices, our dental nurses were doing all the cleaning, decontamination and sterile packaging of our instruments in addition to dealing with high numbers of patients. It wasn't an ideal situation. They were under a lot of pressure and there was a risk things could be missed during exceptionally busy periods.'

The time was right for change. With the help of Raj RajaRayan, associate dean of the London Deanery and one of the planners from the London Dental Education Centre project, the practice devised a plan for a new local decontamination unit that would help it comply with future best practice standards.

State-of-the-art

It was decided The Whitehouse Dental

practice would share a decontamination facility with its sister practice, The Sterling Dental Referral Centre, next door. The result was a state-of-the-art, two-room decontamination unit set up for a one-way flow through of instrument traffic from a 'dirty' to a 'clean' room.

The 'dirty' room has a setting down area for dirty instruments, which enter the room in secure containers from each surgery, plus an ultrasonic bath, two thermal washer disinfectors and a dedicated sink for instrument cleaning. There's also a separate sink for rinsing the instruments and a third sink for hand hygiene.

The 'clean room' has a setting down area for washed and disinfected instruments, task lighting with a magnifying glass for inspection of visible contamination and damage, instrument wrapping, vacuum sterilisers, sterile supplies and cupboards for storing sterilised instruments in pouches and personal protective equipment. There is also an automated pre-sterilisation dental hand-piece cleaning machine.

The rooms have extraction ventilation sited in the dirty room so the air flows from the clean to the dirty area, and entry to the 'clean' room is prohibited to all staff bar a dedicated full-time decontamination operator.



● Purified water 'feeds' the equipment in the 'dirty' room.

Pure water

Crucial to the smooth operation of the decontamination unit is the provision of large quantities of purified water.

'We were getting through two five gallon bottles a day,' explained head nurse Sharon Smither. 'There was no way bottles would cope with the

amount of purified water required once we installed our new compliant equipment. It wouldn't have been practical and we

needed a better solution.'

That solution came in the form of an Elga Process Water Biopure 7/15 purified water system, which is specifically designed to feed up to 15l/hr of ultra-pure water to washer disinfectors, autoclaves and ultrasonic cleaners in dental practices.

'The Biopure is neatly tucked away in a cupboard in the 'dirty' room and feeds the washer disinfectant, autoclaves, ultrasonic bath and the flexible dispense gun is used for manual rinsing,' says Sharon. 'It's easy to use and maintain, and most of the time you forget it's there. On

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Gerard Murray

is sales manager at Elga Process Water.

cross infection control



●The 'clean' room at The Whitehouse Dental Practice.

On the occasions we need help, our service contract with Elga ensures they come out straight away to fix any issues, which is a vital part of the process considering how busy we are and the importance of the water in the decontamination process.'

It's clear the difference the unit has

made to everyone in the practice.

'It's a much better system and has made our lives much easier,' says Sana. 'We're now 100 per cent sure everything is spotless first time and our confidence in the system has increased tremendously.'

Sharon said, 'It's also saved us

time and money. It has helped our instruments last longer. If debris dries on an instrument, you'll never get it off. To the naked eye it might look like it has gone, but the microscopic traces are still there. We're confident our instruments are up to scratch now. There's still room for improvement though. With the introduction of anything new there's a learning period afterwards, and we're tweaking the process to make things more efficient. Because we started soon after the guidelines were introduced in April 2009, we now have the luxury of spending time making sure everything is running smoothly and efficiently, and to attain our registration with the CQC by 2011.'

Contact Elga Process Water by calling 01628 897000, email sales.uk@veoliawater.com or visit www.elgaprocesswater.co.uk



Endodontics now produces the largest single group of cases that result in negligence claims



The startling revelation in Riskwise (34, 2008) that 'endodontics now produces the largest single group of cases that result in negligence claims' makes for shocking reading.



The article goes on to say 'incomplete obturation of the root canal system in the presence of residual infection is the single biggest source of endodontic claims'.



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