In general the receiving or delivery of appropriate oral care and of associated procedures are safe. Current epidemiological data clearly indicate that there is no significant risk of contracting diseases through the provision of dental treatment when recommended infection control procedures are routinely followed.

A key element of infection control recommended by authorities worldwide is the concept of standard precautions, as a means to reduce the risk of disease transmission (e.g. the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, Hepatitis viruses, Tuberculosis and others) in healthcare settings. The primary precept underpinning this concept is the consideration that all patients are potentially infectious, hence the necessity for implementation of comprehensive infection control procedures when treating any patient.

**Universal Infection Control Procedures**

- The FDI urges all oral health professionals to adhere to standard precautions as set forth by the local or regional authorities, as appropriate.

**Access to dental care**

- The FDI believes it is unethical for patients to be denied oral health care solely because of bloodborne disease status.

**Vaccination**

- The FDI urges oral health professionals who may be exposed to infectious risks to be appropriately vaccinated according to guidelines issued by the local authorities, and to take advantage of other vaccines as and when they become available.

**Referral for Medical Evaluation**

- The FDI urges all oral health professionals to be alert for signs and symptoms related to bloodborne and other infectious diseases. Individuals with medical histories or conditions suggestive of infection should be referred to their physicians for further management.

**Patient Disclosure and Confidentiality**

- The FDI urges care providers to have an appropriate protocol, in accordance with applicable local laws, for the confidential handling of information on patients with systemic infections.
• The FDI urges care providers to maintain strict confidentiality of a patient's bloodborne pathogen status and their medical condition. This should not prevent care providers sharing information pertaining to the patient's medical condition with other health care workers, as permitted by local regulations.
• The FDI believes that all patients infected with bloodborne pathogens should disclose their status as part of their medical history. The care provider has to be cognisant of the complete medical history in order to make apposite treatment decisions that are in the best interests of the patient.

Exposure Incidents

• The FDI recommends that all oral health professionals should be familiar with current postexposure protocols for the management of occupational exposures to bloodborne pathogens and institute policies in the work place to ensure appropriate and efficient management of such incidents.

Public Information and Education

• FDI recommends that local or regional dental associations should educate the public on both the efficacy of standard precautions and the absence of a significant risk of contracting bloodborne diseases through the provision of dental care when recommended infection control procedures are routinely implemented.

Professional Education

• The FDI recommends that all oral health professionals keep their knowledge and skills current with regard to infectious diseases that may particularly pose a threat of transmission in clinical settings.
• The FDI recommends the development and updating of local and national educational programmes for the dental team that address infection control recommendations in health care settings (as well as programmes that address the management of the oral and systemic implications of bloodborne diseases).
• The FDI recommends that dental educators comprehensively address and incorporate current infection control recommendations in health care settings in curriculum content and clinical activities.

Mandatory Testing

• The FDI opposes any legislation that mandates compulsory testing of dental health care workers to determine their bloodborne pathogen status.

Main author: Prof L P Samaranayake
Submitted by: FDI Science Commission

Z:\Exec Office\Statements\Approved by GA\Infection Control in Dentistry - SC 2003.doc
version dated: 18th September 2003