TEAM HUDDLE: Understanding the Responsibility of Infection Prevention and Control

Dental infection prevention and control is a system of policies and procedures designed to ensure the use of best practices to kill or reduce the level of potentially dangerous microbes from the treatment environment and support areas. An effective infection control program hinges on the understanding of the WHAT, the WHY, and the HOW of preventive policies and procedures as well as techniques that enhance compliance.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this publication, the reader should be able to:

- describe the role of written standard operating procedures in an infection control program.
- give examples of people skills that may promote compliance with infection control procedures.
- describe infection prevention and control procedures related to transporting sharps containers.
- describe infection prevention and control procedures related to handling laboratory cases.
SCENARIO: The Incident

Dr. Mundo just hired a dental assistant (Irene) who was re-joining the workforce after her two children entered college. Loraine, who is the infection control coordinator (ICC) for the office, met with Irene to describe the hazard communication, exposure, and infection control programs that support the safety culture for the office.

During Irene’s orientation, Loraine referenced the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations. Irene said she did remember “some things about OSHA and the CDC”. As time passed it became clear to Loraine that Irene didn’t understand the importance of complying with all the regulations and recommendations.

Potential Consequences

Having a non-compliant staff person clearly jeopardizes patient and worker safety. In Irene’s case the mishandling of a full sharps container and not closing it during transport could lead to a sharps injury and possible exposure to blood-borne pathogens. Not disinfecting an impression and not describing any decontamination procedures used could result in cross-contamination.

Also, the task of informing office staff, such as Irene, of infection control breaches needs to be done skillfully to bring them into permanent compliance without the consequences of causing ill feelings, loss of morale, and continued poor performance.

Prevention – General Concepts

(For details see pages 3-4)

Irene needs to know the what, why, and how of several infection prevention procedures. Loraine needs to interact with Irene using people skills and the office’s written SOPs.

Some examples that Loraine detected after periodic observations of Irene’s activities included: discarding an old bur into the regular trash; trying to add one last needle into a completely full sharps container; moving a full sharps container without closing the top; not decontaminating an impression before handling it in the in-office laboratory; and not informing the off-site dental laboratory of the disinfecting procedures used on a laboratory case. After several discussions with Irene about her breaches in infection control, it was clear that a different approach was necessary to bring Irene into compliance. Loraine decided to use better “people skills” to motivate Irene to comply with the office’s infection prevention and control standard operating procedures (SOPs).

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1. Place sharp items (e.g., needles, scalpel blades, orthodontic bands, broken metal instruments, and burs) in an appropriate container. Close the container immediately before removal or replacement.\textsuperscript{1,3}

2. **WHY:** It’s extremely important to take whatever steps are necessary to prevent contaminated sharps injuries, for these could lead to the acquisition of a bloodborne disease or other infection to say nothing of the stress just waiting for the results of blood tests. Any contaminated item that could puncture the skin must be handled carefully and be properly contained for disposal so as not to cause injury or the spread of contaminants.

   Not closing a sharps container before moving it and dropping the container or even tipping it after stumbling, results in spilling and the spread of contamination. Also the spilled items must now be gathered up risking contact and injury. Spilled contaminated sharps need to be handled with tongs or a brush and dust pan (which have to be decontaminated after use). Overfilling a sharps container unnecessarily increases the risk of injury when adding just one more item or when attempting to close the container. For safety, consider filling the containers only \( \frac{3}{4} \) full.

3. Develop and maintain written infection prevention and control policies and procedures (e.g., SOPs and OSHA’s required exposure control plan) appropriate for the services provided by the facility and based on evidence-based guidelines, regulations, or standards.\textsuperscript{2}

   **WHY:** Such documents are used in initial and remedial training, evaluation of performance, and determination of compliance with guidelines and regulations. SOPs must be reviewed routinely and updated when necessary for them to remain effective.

4. Before they are handled in the laboratory, clean, disinfect, and rinse all dental appliances and prosthodontic materials (e.g., impressions, bite registrations, occlusal rims, and extracted teeth) by using a hospital disinfectant registered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) having at least intermediate-level (i.e., tuberculocidal claim) activity.\textsuperscript{2}

5. Include specific information regarding disinfection techniques used (e.g., solution used and durations), when laboratory cases are sent off-site and on their return.\textsuperscript{2}

   **WHY:** If contaminated appliances are not properly decontaminated, they can contaminate each piece of laboratory equipment used when manipulating the appliance. If such equipment is not or cannot be disinfected, cross-contamination can occur when that equipment is used to manipulate other appliances or prosthodontic materials. Some laboratory equipment can be difficult to thoroughly decontaminate, so the best approach is to avoid contamination. Off-site dental laboratories commonly disinfect incoming items to help prevent the spread of contaminants. Informing the dental laboratory of the decontamination procedures used by the dental office before sending out laboratory cases helps prevent confusion and ensures proper and safe handling of these contaminated items.

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### Strategies for Promoting Compliance

**Using Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**

A set of written SOPs is an essential part of an effective infection prevention and control program. An SOP is an established procedure for performing a designated task (e.g., instrument cleaning, instrument sterilization, operatory clean-up, and donning and duffing personal protective equipment [PPE]). Anyone performing an infection control procedure needs to follow the appropriate SOP and use that SOP every time they implement that task.\textsuperscript{4} SOPs need to be a part of the staff training and are used along with the CDC’s Infection Prevention Checklist\textsuperscript{1} in the performance evaluation of individual staff members and of the overall infection control program. One approach\textsuperscript{4} to organizing SOPs involves categorizing them as related to:

- **General Preparations:** (e.g., reception area, cough etiquette, clinical area)
- **Before patient treatment:** (e.g., PPE, surface barriers, cleaning and disinfection, operatory set-up)
- **After seating the patient:** (e.g., hand hygiene, antimicrobial mouthrinse, opening instrument packages)
- **During patient treatment:** (e.g., chairside and radiographic asepsis, aseptic retrieval, sharps safety, post-exposure management)
- **After patient treatment:** (e.g., operatory clean-up, instrument processing, waste management, laboratory asepsis, radiograph development, post-exposure management)

(Continued on page 4)
Using People Skills

As emphasized by one of our OSAP members, many infection control coordinators (ICCs) have dealt with a non-compliant staff member, and if not done carefully can cause ill feelings. These may be avoided through the use of “soft skills” (also known as people skills) which refer to the ability to work with or talk to other people in an effective and friendly way. These are in contrast to “hard skills” (technical expertise and knowledge one acquires through experience and education).

People skills were popularized in the mid-1930s by Dale Carnegie. Some of his core principles are shown below in bold followed by a dental related example. These may be one approach to help motivate persons who are non-compliant with infection prevention procedures.

Techniques in Handling People

1. Don’t criticize, condemn, or complain. Be positive. Describe the correct way a procedure can be performed rather than concentrating on the wrong way.
2. Give honest and sincere appreciation. Compliment their efforts.
3. Arouse in the other person an eager want. Emphasize the importance of infection control for the protection of themselves and their patients.

Be a Leader: How to Change People without Giving Offense or Arousing Resentment

1. Begin with praise and honest appreciation. Tell them how you appreciate their hard work and indicate that infection prevention is not always easy to perform.
2. Call attention to people’s mistakes indirectly. Just state the best way to wash hands, or put on personal protective equipment (PPE), or load a sterilizer rather than point out the mistakes made in performing these tasks.
3. Talk about your own mistakes before criticizing the other person. If inadequate training may have caused their incorrect performance, admit it.
4. Ask questions instead of giving direct orders. Ask “Will you be able to follow this SOP?” rather than say “Follow this SOP”.
5. Let the other person save face. Don’t discuss their infection control breaches in the presence of others.
6. Praise every improvement. Be complimentary even for the smallest improvement.
7. Give the other person a fine reputation to live up to. Suggest they can become totally compliant with CDC recommendations and set a good example for others.
8. Use encouragement. Make the fault seem easy to correct. Indicate that they can strive for compliance with just a little extra effort.
9. Make the other person happy about doing what you suggest. State your thanks and appreciation.

Twelve Ways to Win People to Your Way of Thinking

1. The only way to get the best of an argument is to avoid it. Keep cool and be positive by describing the benefits of infection control compliance.
2. Show respect for the other person’s opinions. Never say “You’re wrong”. Say “Here’s another way to think about that procedure”.
3. If you’re wrong, admit it quickly and emphatically. Determine if your previous interactions/training neglected to cover the procedures in question.
4. Begin in a friendly way. Indicate that you’re glad to work with them and appreciate their hard work.
5. Start with questions to which the other person will answer yes. Ask if they think everyone on the dental team has an important role in infection control.
6. Let the other person do a great deal of the talking. Ask if there are any ways they think they can improve on their infection control procedures.
7. Let the other person feel the idea is his or hers. Ask how the office can improve the infection prevention program.
8. Try honestly to see things from the other person’s point of view. Review their background and experience to see if these might be contributing to their infection prevention problems.
9. Be sympathetic with the other person’s ideas and desires. Ask how you can help them with compliance.
10. Appeal to the nobler motives. Tell them that you’re aware their motive for becoming a dental worker is to help patients, and we want to be sure to do everything we can to make patients safe in the office.
11. Dramatize your ideas. Tell them to think how gratifying it is to protect patients against cross-contamination.
12. Throw down a challenge. Ask them to master the changes discussed by a certain reasonable date.
What’s Wrong With This Picture?
Can you identify the breach(es) in infection prevention and safety procedures in this photo of dental health-care personnel (DHCP) administering clinical dental treatment?

Answer: Although the dental operator is wearing a face shield, the dental operator’s face mask is improperly positioned to offer protection. The dental assistant is not wearing protective eyewear. It is hoped that the three-way and handpiece hoses will be properly cleaned and disinfected after patient treatment since they are not barrier protected.

Educational Spotlight

May 31- June 3, 2018 – Fairmont Hotel Dallas, Texas

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Links to Resources


TEAM HUDDLE DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Are your SOPs fully implemented into daily practice?

2. Can your infection control be improved?

3. How should non-compliance with infection prevention procedures be addressed?

Take the Micro-Learning Silent Video Challenge!

Can you identify the actions in this short video that breach infection control or safety?

Access the link below and challenge your dental infection control and safety knowledge.

https://youtu.be/_TSNRZZDFsw

The Scenario: Before patient dental treatment
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**QUESTIONS FOR ONLINE QUIZ**

1. **What is not considered as a sharp?**
   a. Disposable high-volume evacuation tips
   b. Orthodontic bands
   c. Broken explorer
   d. Burs

2. **Should sharps containers be closed before transporting and why?**
   a. Yes, to contain the odor
   b. Yes, to mask an unsightly view
   c. Yes, to avoid accidental spilling of the contents
   d. No, to facilitate emptying the contents for reuse of the container

3. **What is the main reason(s) for having written infection control policies and procedures?**
   a. To show other offices how infection control should be performed
   b. To use in training, compliance, and evaluation of staff performance
   c. To prove the use of specific products so manufacturers will provide future discounts
   d. To document infection control procedures to patients and to use in advertisements

4. **Why include information on disinfection procedures used on laboratory cases sent to off-site dental laboratories?**
   a. To ensure the laboratory can notify the patient exactly how the case was treated
   b. To ensure the disinfectant can be properly neutralized by the laboratory
   c. To ensure the laboratory will use only that disinfectant on the case
   d. To ensure proper and safe handling of the case

5. **Why should dental impressions be cleaned, disinfected, and rinsed before being handled in the laboratory?**
   a. It speeds up the setting of the impression material
   b. It masks the odor produced from the contaminating bacteria
   c. It prevents contamination of dental laboratory equipment and surfaces
   d. It keeps the impression from changing its shape while being transported

6. **What does the acronym SOP stand for in the discipline of infection control?**
   a. Supervised Operatory Preparation
   b. Standard Operating Procedures
   c. Safe Occupational Practice
   d. Sharps Outreach Program

7. **What is the main people skill used to promote infection control compliance after you review the background and experience of the staff person involved to understand what might be contributing to their compliance problem?**
   a. Try honestly to see things from the other person’s point of view
   b. Make the other person happy about doing what you suggest
   c. Let the other person do a great deal of the talking
   d. Let the other person save face

8. **What is the main people skill used to promote infection control compliance if you ask the staff person involved to master the change discussed by a certain date?**
   a. Call attention to the people’s mistakes indirectly
   b. Praise every improvement
   c. Appeal to nobler motives
   d. Throw down a challenge

9. **What is the main people skill used to promote infection control compliance if you don’t discuss the person’s infection control procedure breach in front of others?**
   a. Ask questions instead of giving direct orders
   b. Give the person a fine reputation to live up to
   c. Let the person save face
   d. Dramatize your ideas

10. **What is the main people skill used to promote infection control compliance if you indicate the person involved can become totally compliant and set a good example for others?**
    a. Praise every improvement
    b. Don’t criticize, condemn, or complain
    c. Give the person a fine reputation to live up to
    d. Use encouragement and make the fault seem easy to correct

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Infection control SOPs are important in staff training, performance evaluation, and compliance determination.

2. Using people skills may stimulate compliance with infection control guidelines and regulations.
TEAM HUDDLE HIGHLIGHTS

1. How do you address non-compliance with infection control guidelines and regulations?

2. When did you last evaluate infection control procedures?

3. Are your standard operating procedures for infection control up-to-date?

Read on!