Is Your Office Prepared for an Accidental Needlestick or Other Unexpected Exposure Incident?


For more than 2 decades, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) have periodically issued and updated recommendations and standards (rules) for healthcare professions, including dentistry, to reduce the risks to healthcare workers from occupational exposures to blood and other hazardous body fluids while providing care in healthcare facilities (1-5). Generally, the OSHA standards are based on and parallel the CDC recommendations. These documents include general infection control guidelines for dental offices from the CDC, which were last issued in 1983. However, the CDC guidelines have been updated and reissued in 2007 and 2008, and new information and recommendations have been included. An example of this is the 2008 CDC guidelines that include information on the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and the importance of proper disposal of contaminated sharps. In addition, the OSHA standards have been updated and reissued in 2010, and new information and recommendations have been included. An example of this is the 2010 OSHA standards that include information on the use of PPE and the importance of proper disposal of contaminated sharps. If your office is not prepared for an accidental needlestick or other unexpected exposure incident, you may be putting yourself and your patients at risk. It is important to ensure that your office has a written protocol for managing exposure incidents, and that this protocol is reviewed and updated regularly. In addition, it is important to ensure that all staff members are trained in the proper procedures for managing exposure incidents. This includes knowing how to properly dispose of contaminated sharps, how to properly clean and disinfect surfaces, and how to properly clean and disinfect equipment. It is also important to ensure that all staff members are aware of the importance of proper hand hygiene and the importance of wearing PPE. By taking these steps, you can help to ensure that your office is prepared for an accidental needlestick or other unexpected exposure incident.
On an unusually tropical day in San Francisco, former dentist Tony Protopappas appeared before the U.S. Supreme Court March 24, 2004, with a writ of habeas corpus petitioning his release from prison. Twenty years earlier, in 1984, Protopappas was charged with second-degree murder and sentenced to three concurrent terms of 15 years to life for the deaths of three young women that occurred while they were under general anesthesia.

Protopappas’ career began shortly after he graduated from dental school when he opened his Costa Mesa California Dental Clinic in 1974. By 1982 the practice was flourishing. Protopappas employed five other dentists, as well as many office staff. He was the only practitioner in the office with a license to administer general anes-
Power in the “Present”

How You Are Represented at the American Dental Association

Patricia L. Blanton, D.D.S., Ph.D.
Vice Chairman, XV Trustee District
Chairman, Planning and Review Committee

The XV District (Texas) Trustee to the American Dental Association Dr. Jerry Long said recently, “You have to be present to win.” This article is intended to elaborate on what “to be present” means, how you are represented at the ADA, and how you can better understand the process of representation, if not actually participate in the process.

Texas dentists are represented at the national level by 23 delegates and 19 alternate delegates selected from the various divisions (NE, NW, SE, SW) of Texas. Those serving in one of these 42 positions are selected in meetings (caucuses) of each division. These caucus meetings occur at the annual meeting of the Texas Dental Association and are open to all interested members of the TDA. Dates, times, and places of caucus meetings are announced in the annual session program and usually occur on late Friday afternoon.

It is important that the people who serve in these delegate positions be representative of the dentists in their division. It is important that you “be present” to vote in the Texas caucus. Delegates and alternates selected in caucus are then presented to the House of Delegates of the Texas Dental Association where they are duly elected to be delegates to the ADA. These individuals assume a crucial role in determining the future of dentistry. The ultimate duty of the delegation is to represent the XV Trustee District to affect the policies and actions of the American Dental Association through its House of Delegates in a manner calculated to strengthen the leadership and influence of the ADA.

Historically, the XV District delegation has been engaged and, it would seem to many, successful despite a lack of coordination and long-term planning. But the delegation has probably not fulfilled its potential for leadership and shaping the