

INFECTION CONTROL AND MERCURY SAFETY

The discovery of Antibiotics has been the miracle drug against infections. However, it has relaxed the basic antiseptic techniques by the professionals which they have learned in the 19th century before Antibiotic.

HBV & AIDS has been devastating news to the medical profession and has forced them especially dentist to adopt the old-fashioned barrier techniques of infection control.

Guidelines emphasize barriers procedures

- Wearing of gloves, mask & protective eye wear by dental personnel.
- Routine Autoclaving of instruments
- Means of handling infectious materials

Immunization against HBV became a standard procedures in many countries. However the guidelines remains in effect.

AIDS: The disease

(Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome)

The causative virus was identified in 1983. It is the human T. lymphotropic virus type III/ lymphadenopathy – associated virus (HTLV – III LAV). It can attack T-4 lymphocyte in infected humans thus leading to immunosuppression.

The affected patient is thus vulnerable to opportunistic infections that can overwhelm the patient's compromised or weak defense systems.

AIDS is currently defined as the condition in individuals with Kaposi's Sarcoma and/ or Pneumocystic Carinii pneumonia in addition to other infections such as T.B., meningitis, candidal esophagitis...

There are a variety of HIV disease that do not meet the AIDS definition.

The average time between infection with HIV virus and onset of AIDS-like symptom is estimated to be 10 years.

HIV virus is a sexually transmitted pathogens – both homosexual & heterosexual.

- with birth to an infected mother.
- injection of substantial quantities of infected blood through transfusion or intravenous drug such as factor 8.

The number of infected cases or death is climbing all over the world.

Health workers have become infected through occupational exposures, however the risk of Seroconversion after needle stick exposure is still only about 1:200.

In Florida an infected dentist who died later was found to be the cause of cross infection to some of his patients.

In 1991 ADA issued a policy that infected dentists should not perform invasive procedures & should inform the patients of the disease.

Oral Manifestation of HIV Infection:

Principal signs are : Oral Candidiasis, Kaposi's Sarcoma, Oral hairy leukoplakia, in addition to other periodontal conditions.

AIDS issue in Dental Practice and Dental Education:

Some dentists refuse treatment of AIDS patients. It was found to be unethical to do so.

- a. risk of transmission of HIV from patient to dentists is extremely low.
- b. They might have already treated infected patients.

Issue raised in dental education by AIDS epidemics are many, some questions are:

- Should an HIV student be allowed to dental school?
- What will the school do if a dental student became HIV positive in the course of clinical duties?

Should a student be disciplined for refusing to treat known HIV positive patients?