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NHS Dental Services

Our ref: POL/33888
17 March 2020

Dear Colleague

Scottish Government is clear the NHS is on an 'emergency footing' during the current COVID-19 outbreak and that providing routine dentistry 'as normal' is no longer sustainable.

We need to stop undertaking aerosol generating procedures (AGPs) which are a frequent daily occurrence in routine dental care. Also, we should reduce unnecessary close personal contact for people in vulnerable groups, in line with Scottish Government guidance for older people, those with underlying health conditions and those who are pregnant.

We are also aware of the impact on COVID-19 as practices and other dental service staff develop symptoms. Those staff, should stay at home for 7 days from the onset of symptoms as per existing advice. In addition, it is now recommended that anyone living in the same household as a symptomatic person should self-isolate for 14 days. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are a recent onset of:

- a new continuous cough **or**;
- a high temperature.

Our Priorities: Maintaining dental services

- Delivery of urgent care to patients **with** symptoms of COVID-19 only at designated urgent dental care treatment centres. 'In hours' and 'out of hours' calls handled by NHS24 and appointments arranged by local NHS Board.
- Delivery of urgent dental care to patients **with no** symptoms of COVID-19; 'in hours' as usual in GDS and PDS sites and 'out of hours' in the usual OoH centres. In exceptional cases, when a short AGP is unavoidable, for example, to 'open to drain'; use full-face visor and fluid-resistant facemask and effective high volume suction

- Delivery of routine dental care to patients **with no** symptoms of COVID-19; practices and clinics to open as usual wherever possible and undertake non-aerosol generating routine dental care for non-symptomatic patients.
- Minimise transmission of COVID-19 within surgeries by not undertaking aerosol generating procedures (AGPs).

Clinical care: Effective from 18 March 2020

- A. Dental teams must establish by phone or text (or, if prior contact has not been possible, on arrival), if a patient who has a booked appointment is a potentially infective case prior to the visit. Use clearly visible instructions at practice or clinic entrance.
- B. Given the potential risk of asymptomatic cases attending in this delay phase it seems sensible and necessary at this time to reduce exposure of staff and patients to infection by avoiding all aerosol generating procedures wherever possible.
- C. Reduce the number of routine check-ups by cancelling patients from vulnerable groups (and offer to anyone who wishes to do so) to reduce the need to travel and have close contact with others in waiting rooms and surgeries.
- D. Remove all unnecessary items from waiting rooms and work surfaces. Ensure thorough environmental cleaning using robust infection prevention and control procedures, wiping down all surfaces between patients using standard PPE.

GDS practice support:

- Practices providing NHS services will receive financial support; see additional PCA issued today for more details.
- NHS Boards may ask practice dental teams work in other ways to support local service delivery efforts in the challenging weeks ahead.
- The practice inspection programme will be paused until further notice.

PDS National Programmes:

- The National Dental Inspection Programme will be paused for this year.
- All Childsmile home visits will cease
- Childsmile fluoride varnish nursery & school visits to cease
- Priority group oral health programme visits to undertake carer training to cease
- Childsmile nurse and school toothbrushing programmes to continue as usual for as long as possible; support to be offered re staff or parental concerns around COVID-19 and toothbrushing.

Future steps:

Should the COVID-19 outbreak escalate further, there may come a point when all non-urgent dental care will cease. All dental teams will be notified should this be the case.

Yours sincerely



Tom Ferris
Chief Dental Officer