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(by email)

1 April 2022

Dear colleague

DE-ESCALATION OF COVID-19 INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL (IPC) MEASURES

I have been advised by the Chief Nursing Officer's Nosocomial Review Group (CNRG) that they have reviewed the advice from the Antibiotic Resistance & Healthcare Acquired Infection (ARHAI) group of NHS NSS and that the COVID guidance has been amended.

The Chief Nursing Officer has issued a letter, DL(2022)07, to NHS Scotland with the proposed changes that are able to come into force with immediate effect, and you will receive a copy of this through usual Board channels.

Any decision on the timing of the implementation of these changes within dental practices should be made by practice teams, according to their local circumstances. Once implemented these changes will have a significant, and I believe, positive impact on the ability of dental teams to manage their clinical workload.

General messages now include:

- The triage of patients, prior to their appointment and re-checking upon arrival, using respiratory risk-assessment screening questions will continue.
- Based on this respiratory risk-assessment, the patient should be assigned to either the respiratory pathway or non-respiratory pathway, as at present.
- The universal use of fluid resistant surgical masks (FRSM) on practice premises by practice staff remains.
- Where staff have concerns about the potential for COVID-19 exposure they may choose to wear an FFP3 respirator rather than an FRSM when performing an AGP on any patient provided they are fit tested. This is a personal PPE risk assessment.



- Other mitigations are to continue, for example, appropriate ventilation to maximise air changes in surgery, use of a speed-reducing handpiece to minimise AGP frequency, use of rubber dam and high volume suction to minimise dental aerosol.
- COVID-19 contact exemption for any patient who is fully vaccinated and have tested PCR positive in the last 28 days.

Non-respiratory pathway:

- For patients on the non-respiratory pathway standard IPC measures can now apply for all procedures including AGPs.
- Physical distancing restrictions have been removed for asymptomatic patients.
- The universal use of face coverings in the healthcare setting by patients on the non-respiratory pathway remains.
- There is no need for fallow time.

Respiratory pathway:

- For patients on the respiratory pathway transmission-based IPC measures as well as standard IPC measures apply, as at present.
- Patients on the respiratory pathway should have treatment postponed if possible, with any treatment restricted to urgent care where treatment cannot be provided remotely or postponed, as at present.
- Patients on the respiratory pathway, where they require a face to face appointment for urgent care should continue to be separated by space or time from other patients, e.g. at the end of a treatment session.
- Fallow times are only required following an AGP on the respiratory pathway
- The universal use of face masks (FRSM) in the healthcare setting by patients on the respiratory pathway continues.

We will, of course, update the Standard Operating Procedure to reflect these changes over the coming days but I thought it helpful to give you notice of the changes to allow you and your teams to start to prepare for a change in practice organisation. Please note, these changes will have no effect on the value of the 'multiplier' payment for the three month period of the April-paid May 2022 to June-paid July 2022 schedules.

I would ask that, as at present, should you have any concerns regarding possible increased nosocomial transmission, you keep your primary care dental leads and consultants in dental public health informed. Also, I would remind you that LFD test kits remain available from NSS for dental staff to continue with their twice-weekly asymptomatic testing.

Finally, can I thank you for the efforts that dental teams have put in to ensure as many patients as possible have been able to access care on the basis of clinical need during the various phases of the pandemic over the past two years. It has been hugely satisfying to see all parts of the sector pull together for the common good and we should be rightly proud.

Kind regards,



Tom Ferris
Chief Dental Officer