Management of hazardous materials in a dental office

Business, Management

The OSHA standards offer a guideline on how dentists, dental lab technicians and other dental health workers should work without the risk of exposure to blood borne pathogens and hazardous chemicals and substances they use in their line of work. These standards outline the kind of risks such health workers are exposed to and how they can be protected from them.

Compliance to such standards involves having a plan to control or eliminate employee exposure to blood and also reviewing the plan at least annually to modify the responsibilities of dental health workers involved in areas where exposure to infected blood is a common occurrence. This involves job rotation and limitation of exposure time to health hazards.

Employers should provide for their employees in a dental office the necessary equipment to protect them from blood borne pathogens. Such devices include syringes whose needle is shielded with a sheath after use and needles that can be drawn back into a syringe immediately after use to avoid pricking or exposure of extracted blood. Taps with constant running water should also be availed for use in cleaning eyes in case of exposure. Gloves are also a necessity as it is hazardous to handle blood with bare hands. An employee should also get a means to flush any secretions, saliva or mucous membranes in the case of exposure.

Safe disposal of sharp objects is vital in preventing exposure to blood borne pathogens among dental care workers. This safe disposal involves the use of sharp containers which are puncture-resistant. Such should be labelled correctly and placed out of reach of children and other patients. They should also be waterproof to prevent flow of infected blood from them. The sharp containers should have an opening wide enough to allow easy placement of

disposable sharp objects and should never be over-filled. Once full, it should be safely sealed and disposed.

MSDS is a document outline the safety and emergency procedure for workers in terms of handling a substance, its physical data and storage requirements, how to dispose of it and how to act in case it spills. Such information safeguards workers against poor handling of hazardous substances and identifies the dangers of contact and contamination (Miller, 2005). MSDS can vary with country and supplier.

A color code, combined with a 0 to 4 number rating, was developed to assist in compliance of OSHA communication standards in terms of identifying hazards. The Hazardous Materials Identification System uses blue for health hazards, red for flammability, orange to represent a physical hazard and personal protection is symbolized by white. In the case of a dental office, the health hazards of a chemical substance can be numbered as 4 to show life-threatening danger in case of frequent exposure, 3 to indicate likelihood of major injury unless immediate action is taken, 2 for minor injury, 1 for irritation and 0 for no significant health risk. These codes are standardized for ease of use globally.

Employees should be trained how to read and understand color and number codes on chemicals and also how to look them up in MSDS so as to know how to handle, store and react to their exposure or spilling. They should also be trained on how to dress for the job.

Works cited

Miller, Chris H., and Charles John Palenik. Infection control & management of hazardous materials for the dental team. 3rd ed. St. Louis, Mo.: Elsevier Mosby, 2005

This paper identifies the OSHA blood borne standards that apply for hazardous materials and that can be used by health workers in a dental office. The materials termed as hazardous also include infected blood and mucous membranes, saliva and chemicals that are found either bottled or packed in sachets within the dental office. The paper also touches on the materials and physical equipment that a dental office should provide to its employees to safeguard them from hazardous materials. Moreover, disposal of sharp objects by use of sharp container has been illustrated and outlined. An explanation of MSDS and its importance have been outlined, indicating the components of the document and its usability in a dental office. The use of color codes and a numbering system to identify hazardous materials and their effects has been explained, with a distinct explanation of the meaning of different color codes, together with the training that employees need in order to comply with OSHA standards for hazardous chemicals.