

Safety Hazards Related To The Dental Hygiene Profession

Dental professionals may be at risk for exposure to numerous workplace hazards. These hazards include but are not limited to bloodborne and airborne pathogens, radiation, pharmaceuticals and other chemical agents and ergonomic hazards. Although there are potential safety hazards associated with the dental hygiene profession, Pima Medical Institute is committed to providing the necessary education, equipment, and environment to assist their students in creating and managing safe work environments.

Bloodborne Pathogens and Transmission of Infectious Diseases:

Pima Medical Institute is required to comply with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens Standards found in Title 29, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1910.1030. A copy of these standards is available upon request from the Dental Hygiene Program Director.

The OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standards were implemented in 1992 to address concerns of occupational transmission of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), hepatitis B, and other bloodborne pathogens. The Standard outlines procedures to be used to prevent occupational exposure to bloodborne pathogens. It was originally published in the Federal Register, vol. 56, no. 235, December 6, 1991, pp. 64715-64182.

The Needlestick Safety and Prevention Act, (H.R. 5178, November 6, 2000), amended the Bloodborne Pathogens Standard to include stronger requirements to provide safety needles, more accurate recording of needlesticks, and the involvement of workers in the selection of equipment and work practices to prevent needlesticks and other exposures to blood.

Ionizing Radiation:

Ionizing radiation sources may be found in a wide range of occupational settings including health care facilities. These radiation sources can pose a considerable health risk to affected workers if not properly controlled. It is the policy of Pima Medical Institute that the use and operation of dental x-ray equipment and handling /disposing of related chemicals will be performed in a safe manner in accordance with federal and state regulations. Students will be trained in technical, safety, and aseptic radiographic requirements before patient interaction is allowed. All x-ray treatment on patients will occur with appropriate faculty oversight and only in accordance with established protocols.

The overall responsibility of radiation safety rests with Pima Medical Institute. However, the responsibility of minimizing exposure to ionizing radiation belongs to the individual utilizing x-ray equipment or anyone who may be required to enter an area where x-ray equipment is being used. The user of the radiation source is responsible for patient protection. The user of the radiation source will adhere to radiographic exposure guidelines adapted from the American Dental Association and US Food and Drug Administration, however, the guidelines are subject to clinical judgment and may not apply to every patient.

A full copy of the Dental Hygiene's policies on Bloodborne Pathogens and Infectious Disease is available upon request.