



A dental office may seem like a benign institution but the dental office has many more safety hazards and regulatory requirements than a metal fabrication shop. This article will be looking into the Blood-borne Pathogens exposures that dental offices face every day.

What are BBP (Blood-borne Pathogens)?

BBP or Blood-borne Pathogens are infectious microorganisms in human blood that can cause disease in humans. These pathogens include, but are not limited to, Hepatitis B (HBV), Hepatitis C (HCV), and Human Immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Needle sticks and other sharps-related injuries may expose workers to blood-borne pathogens.

How does exposure to body fluid affect us?

Dental professionals use needles for Novocain, hand and ultrasonic scales, etc. that could penetrate the dermal layer of the skin allowing the body to accept these contaminants. The contaminants range from the common cold to Hepatitis, HIV or other infectious diseases. Exposure to BBP can be transmitted from blood or any other body fluid, excretion or secretion except for tears and sweat. However, according to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) the transmission of pathogens in this environment is a rare occurrence.

The book titled "The Checklist Manifesto" by Atul Gawande discussed how the use of checklists make everyday procedures fool proof. The medical field are diligent in the use of their checklists.

In summary, the Dental Office faces exposures to Blood-borne Pathogens on a daily basis. OSHA and the CDC partnered together to provide guidelines on how to improve the dental offices safety and health through standard precautions, training, checklists and Personal Protective Equipment.

BBP Hazard Protection

- Proper protocol for BBP protection begins with training and education of the staff.
- The appointed OSHA Coordinator provides the required training at hire and then as recommended by OSHA and the CDC.
- They follow the same Infection Control Plans that are used in medical offices and hospitals.
- Dental Professionals are offered vaccinations for Hepatitis B and C and taught how to follow Universal or Standard Precautions in the office.
- Personal Protective Equipment used in the Dental Office includes: gloves, safety glasses and face mask.
- Dental Professionals manage the BBP program through use of checklist, policies and procedures.
- They follow procedures for cleaning an effected area with biohazard materials, sharps containers, etc.