



POLICY STATEMENT

Treatment of Patients Living With HIV/AIDS

Infection with HIV results in a chronic and potentially debilitating terminal disease that requires careful and meticulous care by health professionals. The use of Universal Precautions allows the dental team to treat all persons safely and effectively. The profession continues to pursue the best treatment modalities available to ensure the maximum degree of patient comfort and safety in the dental office. The dental profession has informed the public that a dental office, using Universal Precautions, is a safe environment for all. As such, dental care should be provided in a consistent, professional manner. Practitioners in British Columbia must not refuse treatment to patients solely on the basis of their HIV seropositivity. The following statements are of importance:

1. Dentists have a moral and ethical responsibility to render necessary dental treatment to all members of the public. Dentists are the only persons who can provide a comprehensive oral diagnosis and establish a treatment plan, and they are ultimately responsible for the management of people with dental disease or orofacial injuries.
2. By ensuring the established communicable disease management protocols (Universal Precautions), as outlined in the *Guidelines on Infection Control* of the College of Dental Surgeons of BC, are routinely carried out, dental treatment can and should be provided in the dental office for patients living with HIV/AIDS as part of routine care, unless medical complications or oral conditions are such that this would be inadvisable.
3. Some patients living with HIV/AIDS will require referrals for specialized treatment. These referrals should occur in a routine manner and should not occur solely because the patients are HIV seropositive. Clear and effective communication is essential to ensure that these patients understand the nature of the problem necessitating referral and the reasons for it.

Through numerous articles published in dental journals, continuing education courses and information disseminated from the College, dentists have been informed and educated about their responsibility in treating all members of the public. This information clearly identifies and emphasizes the lack of measurable risk of transfer of infection when the dental office employs Universal Precautions, i.e. proper barrier techniques. This policy reflects current knowledge and is subject to periodic review and revision.

Drafted November 1998 – Updated April 2009