

Please accept my submission for the following proposal

1. Do you support the proposed Supplementary risk management principles for oral health during the COVID-19 pandemic

Treating patients with a Low risk of transmission = This means the outer protective clothing you normally wear (gown, scrubs, tunics etc.). It can be short sleeve or long sleeve. When long sleeve, change between patients. When short sleeve, change between patients OR alternatively wear a plastic apron over it and change the apron between patients. Ensure proper cleaning of the forearm up to the elbow when performing hand hygiene when short sleeve is worn.

I do not agree with this proposal for the following reasons

* these patients have already been risk assessed and determined as LOW risk and there is not enough evidence in your cited research articles for me to believe there is the need for this.

* I may see up to 9 patients a day and the majority will be low risk and your own proposal says there is *"a lower risk of fomite transmission than previously thought,"*

* It is impracticable to change gowns between patients. I am likely to disturb and create more aerosols/fomite disturbance in the air and to myself by the physical effort of removal of each gown. These gown changes would affect a staff of up to 12 people in our practice and we have no separate private area to change in or store the new gowns and supposedly contaminated gowns.

* I do not agree with wearing of plastic aprons. An apron will only give limited cover to the middle torso of a clinician who when treating patients sits behind the patient chair and the most exposed part of the clinician is the chest and arms. I strongly do not agree with the environmental impact that this plastic rubbish will have in a time when New Zealanders are encouraged to decrease the amount of plastic they use.

Moderate risk of transmission = Patient has no known clinical or COVID-19 epidemiological risk factors, but there is no evidence that the patient is fully vaccinated.

Once again the patient has been risk assessed and the only difference to low risk is they are unvaccinated or status unknown

I consider that with the universal cross infection procedures that we already have in place these moderate risk patients are under no more risk in the dental setting than they are out in the general public where people could be coughing and sneezing as you cite in your own document. Therefore again I do not see the need to wear the plastic aprons or change gowns for the same reasons I state above.

High risk of transmission Patient is confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19, or to have clinical and/or epidemiological risk.

As your document says *"with every health care interaction, practitioners need to assess the risk to their own, and to their staff's safety, and implement appropriate evidence-based measures commensurate with the level of that risk."*

If a hygiene patient was assessed as high risk then I hope that I would not be expected to treat them for a dental hygiene appointment as the risk to myself and other staff is too high. I would hope that we could ask the patient to defer the appointment just as we would have in the past non covid environment to any one that had any cold or flue like symptoms.

Thank you

Sheree Sharp Hygienist
DC ID 23800