

Guest Editorial

REAFFIRMING THE NEED FOR INFECTION CONTROL



Dr. Benoit Soucy

The National Conference on Infection Control and Occupational Health was an attempt to answer a fundamental question: "How safe is safe enough?" The answer turned out to be: "It depends."

By pure coincidence, the television show *20/20* aired its sensationalist report on dental unit waterlines (DUW) during the conference. If we were to believe *20/20*, dentists are not doing enough to guarantee that the water they provide for their patients is of an acceptable bacteriological quality. Had the reporter looked at the issue from the point of view of accessibility of care, or had he been preoccupied by the possible development of multiple-resistant strains of bacteria resulting from the use of chemicals for the treatment of DUW, he would have arrived at a different conclusion.

The issue of DUW provided a great illustration that the answer to our fundamental question is not absolute. In fact, the same held true for just about every issue on the conference program. When considering prophylactic antibiotic therapy, how can the practitioner balance the need for protection against

bacterial endocarditis and the risk of causing an antibiotic-induced colitis? Just when we started to believe that universal precautions were receiving universal acceptance, we heard of "standard precautions, plus." Even the advisability of wearing gloves had to be reconfirmed in relation to the increase in latex allergies both in patients and dentists.

The conference was a unique opportunity to gather the movers and the shakers in infection control and occupational health. The first day and a half consisted of a continuing education course during which participants were treated to an extremely dynamic series of short lectures by outstanding presenters. In addition, most of them stayed to act as scientific advisors during the roundtable discussions that made up the remainder of the conference and produced the conference recommendations. As a group, these presenters formed an incredible scientific committee and I wish to thank them all for their invaluable contribution. We are also very grateful that all the speakers contributed to this issue of the *Journal*, making for a very special edition.

A large part of our success was due to the hospitality offered by the School of Dentistry of The University of Western Ontario. I want to extend special thanks to its Dean, Dr. Stan Kogon, whose opening remarks set the tone for the rest of the program and helped participants focus on the main issues. Some of the most important contributors to the conference were unfortunately not in attendance to witness the results of their efforts. These were the members of the steering committee, who during the preceding months made sure everything was in place for a successful event. They were responsible for making sure that all the relevant issues were addressed by the best speakers and in the most appropriate format. I am extremely grateful for their unselfish work. Both the steering committee and the scientific committee were chaired by Dr. Gillian McCarthy. Without her, this conference would

never have materialized. I can only hope that the profession as a whole will recognize her contribution, not only in the organization of this conference but also through her research and publications.

Although the conference was held almost 9 months ago, follow-up work on the many recommendations is only starting. CDA will handle a few of these on its own, but will need the help of all participating organizations to address the whole of the recommendations for the benefit of our patients and the profession.

Steering committee:

Dr. Gillian McCarthy
Dr. David Chimilar
Dr. Jacques Laforce
Dr. Gary MacDonald

Scientific committee:

Dr. John Molinari
Dr. Michael John
Dr. Jean Barbeau
Dr. Gillian McCarthy

Dr. Benoit Soucy

Manager, Professional Services

Audio Presentation

An update on the clinical aspects of latex allergies

by Dr. John Molinari

A presentation made at the National Conference on Infection Control and Occupational Health in Dentistry on February 19, 2000.

To access this presentation, please go to the November 2000 edition of the *eJCDA* at : <http://www.cda-adc.ca/jcda/vol-66/issue-10/index.html>. For those who don't already have Real Player installed on their computer, there are instructions about how to download this free software.