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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY REVIEW COMMISSION

October 24, 2009

To Arthur Coccodrilli (Independent Regulatory Review Board),

We are pediatric dentists in Northeastern Pennsylvania, and are writing due to a concern we have about new legislation of hygienists being allowed to administer local anesthetic to their patients. It is my understanding that they would be considered trained and efficient in this process after only 30 hours of training.

Giving local anesthetic to an individual is not simply injecting a liquid into a patient's gingiva to obtain numbness for a specific area of the mouth. Contained in a carpule of anesthetic is a medicine that the administrator needs to completely be aware of. They need to understand its biochemical make-up, its effects on the whole body (not just the area they are attempting to anesthetize), breakdown by specific organs, and route of removal by the body.

Part of being trained as a dentist is understanding the body as a whole. We were made to take intensive biochemistry, physiology, anatomy, and pharmacology classes. Looking at these courses as whole allows the dentist to understand the processes that make our body run. When injecting a local anesthetic, one must understand that where that medicine goes and its effects. What happens if you accidentally inject it into the blood supply or inject through a nerve and create complete or partial anesthesia? Who is going to be responsible for any problems that may arise? Dentists inject thousands of carpules of local a day, and sometimes situations arise that can cause injection into the pterygoid plexus, cause a neuroma, or Bells Palsy. Is a hygienist going to understand these problems, and be properly trained to handle the situation?

Being pediatric dentists, looking at the amount of local anesthetic that an individual's body can handle is a very important process. Because of the small body weight of these children, too much local (even as much as 2 carpules) can be deadly. Will hygienists be properly trained on understanding how much local anesthetic a person can get based on body weight and/or medical restrictions? Also, will they be properly trained in reviewing and understanding contraindications in a person's medical history? Will they be trained to recognize and deal with signs and symptoms of a toxic lidocaine overdose?

I fail to recognize that what took several courses of basic science courses at an undergraduate level, 4 years of dental school, and 3 years of residency to understand and appreciate will be thoroughly mastered by a hygienist in 30 hours of training?

Sincerely,

  
Kristin A. Paoli, DMD

Stephanie Potter Hanyon, DMD

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REVIEW COMMISSION

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comments:

Please see attached.