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Dear Colleague

QUALITY ISSUES IN RADIOGRAPHY AND COMPLIANCE WITH IRMER (NI) 2000

Following a recent audit of radiographs claimed by a dental practice under the General Dental Services (GDS), several concerns in relation to compliance with the *Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposure) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000* were identified. The main findings from this audit were:

- In no instance were adequate details documented in the patient record to justify each medical exposure
- In no instance were adequate details documented in the patient record to provide a clinical evaluation of the outcome of each medical exposure
- In no instance was there evidence to ensure that quality assurance of the medical exposures was undertaken
- In some cases, medical exposures to provide several panoramic radiographs were undertaken within a 12 month period with no documented justification
- In several cases, panoramic radiographs were claimed under the GDS but were not present in the patient records.

The purpose of this letter is to advise all dentists that they are required to comply with the requirements of IRMER (NI) 2000. Some of the key requirements detailed in IRMER (NI) 2000 are:

- The roles and respective responsibilities of the employers, practitioners, operators and referrers
- The need to provide a framework of procedures for medical exposures
- The need to establish written protocols for standard radiological procedures
- The need to have quality assurance programmes for standard operating procedures
- The need to justify each medical exposure
- The need to ensure that a clinical evaluation is recorded of each medical exposure

- The need to carryout clinical audit
- Employers are expected to ensure that practitioners and operators undertake continuing education and training after qualification

The IRMER (NI) 2000 can be downloaded at:

<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/sr/sr2000/20000375.htm>.

Dentists will also find the 'Guidance Notes for Dental Practitioners on the Safe Use of X-Ray Equipment' a very helpful source of information on what their requirements are under IRMER 2000 and the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1999 (IRR99). This document can be downloaded at http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAwebFile/HPAweb_C/1194947310610.

Dentists are also reminded that under the General Dental Service Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993 Schedule 2, Part IV they are required to:

- Keep records which are full, accurate and contemporaneous, and this includes all radiographs
- Establish and operate a quality assurance system which includes a system to ensure that all legal requirements relating to radiological protection are satisfied.

All dentists registered with the General Dental Council are now required to undertake at least 5 hours verifiable CPD in radiography and radiation protection in each CPD cycle. NIMDTA run a variety of postgraduate activities which dentists may find useful in order to fulfil their GDC CPD requirements. Dental Practice Advisers employed by the Health Boards can also provide advice on how to comply with the necessary regulations.

We would advise dentists to familiarise themselves with their obligations in relation to IRMER (NI) 2000, IRR (NI) 2000 and the GDS regulations and to make any necessary improvements to their practices to ensure compliance with these regulations. The IRMER Inspector, Health and Safety Executive and commissioners of general dental services will closely monitor compliance with all legal requirements under IRMER (NI) 2000, IRR (NI) 2000 and GDS regulations (NI) 1993.

Yours sincerely



DONNCHA O'CAROLAN
Acting Chief Dental Officer