

COVID-19

Lee Savarrio - Chief of Dentistry Update (29-4-2020)

My intention from next week is to reduce the number of my updates to perhaps 3 per week. However if there are any significant changes or guidance issued we will obviously forward this to you.

We are now starting to look at our recovery plans. I am acutely aware that some of you, especially in general practice are anxious about the resumption of dental care. In planning for the phasing of reintroduction of dentistry it is clear there will be a need to reintroduce “semi-urgent care” at some point leading to further resumption of dental care across our HDS, PDS and GDS services. In addition, we have a very complicated return to training for our BDS and DHT students as well as our Vocational Dental Practitioners, Core Trainees and Specialty Registrars. In order to do this we hope that GDS colleagues can be utilised to take on the lion’s share of the urgent care within the PDS Hubs and possibly as capacity demands in the future in some GDS sites again, releasing PDS and HDS staff to support, for example, the services required for special care and paediatric patients within the recovery plan as well as the specialist dental patients awaiting treatment or whose treatment has been paused.

- All of the 100 referrals received yesterday to the PDS Special Care Hub and were by email. This is great news and will without a doubt help to streamline the patient journey, and help reduce inefficiencies in how care is delivered.

As I have said we are learning each day by using the new form and refining our processes. I hope the following hint/tips/feedback is useful to you and your patients.

- We cannot undertake treatment for patients when the referral form is incomplete, it is vital that information is included in all sections of the form, in particular ensure you identify the tooth and include the patient’s full medical history. There are many instances of delayed treatment because of medical histories that haven’t been thoroughly explored ahead of the referral.
- It has been highlighted that that one of the delays to patient management is not being able to contact the patient. It would be very helpful if the referring GDP could advise the patient to look out for a call from an 0800 number. Many patients do not answer their phones as they either don't recognise the number or think it is someone trying to sell them something. This can add hours to the process.
- Obviously we cannot confirm a treatment plan or diagnosis until the patient is actually seen. To help manage patient expectations and anxiety, it would be helpful for all triaging and vetting clinicians to explain to patients that although they have been recommended an extirpation this may not be an option when the patient is seen and an extraction may be required noting especially that this will leave a gap.

- I cannot overemphasise the importance of maintaining good clinical records throughout this COVID situation. As mentioned in previous e-mails simply writing “pain” as the diagnosis and “antibiotic prescription” as the treatment as was done circa 1988 is insufficient defence if challenged by a patient and / or the regulator. Patients have been exceptionally accepting of the current situation but that will not last forever and indeed there have already been patient complaints to the Scottish Government First Minister about dental treatments being withheld. Please protect yourself and your decision making by good record keeping. Remember if it is not written in the notes it did not happen including conversations about treatment options.

- Testing for staff and their household members should be through the line management referral form and not direct to the general site at Glasgow Airport.

- We continue to look for PPE, in particular Type IIR masks and implant PPE kits including surgical gowns. We are hoping to try and distribute these throughout the wider NHS family, including acute sites and Care Homes. If you have any, which you can donate, could you please contact GDSadmin@ggc.scot.nhs.uk with the subject as PPE and include the amount you have available, the practice address and a mobile number. Once again my thanks for your help and support.

Stay Safe
Lee Savarrio, Chief of Dentistry