

CONTAMINATING YOUR CLIENT COULD COST YOU MORE THAN JUST YOUR BUSINESS

Control the Spread of Disease

It wasn't all that long ago when it was quite acceptable for hospital visitors to light up a cigarette while visiting a patient, nor was it that long ago when your dentist would have his fingers strolling around the inside of your mouth without wearing protective latex gloves. Sanitation, while not in the dark ages, certainly bordered on it, considering that the first disposable latex gloves weren't manufactured until 1964, yet we were advanced enough to be in the process of putting a man on the moon, only five years later in 1969.

The *germ revolution* of the late 1800's was an era spanning two decades that restructured our comprehension of disease, in effect, a burst of newfound knowledge that revealed the role that microbes played in causing disease. Scientists and doctors finally realized the need for sterile operating conditions and that diseases were not a spontaneous occurrence.

With proof in hand that germs actually did transmit sickness, healthcare professionals committed to the moderate hygienic practices of the times, albeit a hundredfold better than before. While surgical gloves were still off in the future, doctors at least began scrubbing their hands, something not previously done, plus infected patients were now segregated and isolated from others. The public at large were educated on this discovery and they too adopted improved hygiene such as covering their mouth when coughing and covering their face when sneezing, something that seems so commonplace now, but so foreign back then.

Yet, with all of our acquired wisdom and precautions, the free wheeling lifestyle of multiple partners and the brazen, unprotected sex of the 60's and 70's, did not support our apparent knowledge of disease defense, for it wasn't until the discovery of AIDS in 1981 that we really sat up and took notice. This was closely followed by the identifying of

the Hepatitis C Virus or HCV, in 1988, an equally deadly and easily communicable disease, both, as of this writing, without cure.

HIV-positive attacks the immune system causing the body to eventually lose the ammunition required to fight the fight in the battle of life. An equal final outcome comes with being infected with HCV as it has an elevated mutation rate. The constant changes in the virus make it hard for the body's own immune system to fight it off because as soon as it figures it out, the virus changes and looks different and it is for this same reason that it is very difficult to develop a vaccine.

In days gone by, deadly viruses immigrating from distant continents, afforded some degree of protection through distance, by virtue of the length of time it took to reach us. Today, these continents are virtually next door neighbors as they are a mere flight away, at supersonic speeds.

It is difficult to understand, that with the deadly and incurable viruses that surround us and their ability to spread world wide in a wink, why certain professionals are staying with their heads in the sand, and not protecting themselves and their clients through the implementation of the most basic of precautions. I am of the opinion that it is more the financial implications, rather than ignorance of the threat. It is a sorrowful state if this is the case, as the cost per client to a business is minimal versus the potential cost to the business of a door closing lawsuit. It is common for gifted people in the service industry to have started a business through happenstance as opposed to by design. Regrettably, being the top in your field of work does not guarantee you a successful business. Many do not understand the most fundamental aspects of business, where a penny spent today, can save you, or make you, a dollar tomorrow.

Most recently, the use of barriers to prevent cross contamination between clients is the latest push by health organizations in Canada and the United States. Masks and latex or nitrile disposable gloves have been the forerunner in protection and are no longer employed by healthcare workers alone but now encompass anyone who can come in contact with bodily fluids and blood borne pathogens. Police officers, teachers, janitors, etc.

Barrier film, of a thickness approved by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, (OSHA), or Health Canada, is to be used to cover instruments used in a procedure where those instruments can come in contact with a client or patient and where they are of a type that they cannot be sterilized, such as electrical cords on a tattoo hand piece, the hand piece itself, a cradle where an instrument rests and the board or device the instruments are plugged into. The most recognizable example of this is the barrier film attached to the handle of your dentist's overhead light which he/she is constantly maneuvering with gloved hand. As is the case with disposable gloves, these barriers are to be replaced with each client so as not to transfer any possible fluids that have transferred to the components by a previous client and that can be cross contaminated by the technician's new

gloves as she manipulates the machine. There are those who try to comply by using the less expensive domestic cellophane wraps however domestic clear plastic kitchen wrap is a permeable substance and not of a safe density to block microscopic pathogens from seeping through. While the scientific community continues to make colossal strides in their fight against disease, the microbe community continues to develop new strains of viruses that threaten our way of life. To live an existence in a germ free world, is as likely to us as putting a man on the moon was to our forefathers. Until that time, it is up to us to protect ourselves and our clients, and to employ whatever defensive procedures that are developed.

As I tell my children, look both ways before crossing the street. Do not depend on others to protect your life, it is your responsibility.

The above article is courtesy of the Micro-Pigmentation Centre, a training centre for cosmetic tattooing and where cross contamination education is part of the curriculum. For more information or to purchase barrier film contact at:
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