

# Odontogenic cervico-fascial infections: a continuing threat

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## Précis

Dental abscesses can evolve to cervico-fascial infections with potentially life-threatening complications. General dental practitioners (GDPs) have a crucial role, as they are often the first point of contact for patients. Close monitoring and re-evaluation of the patient is essential. The paper highlights such severe complications and offers an optimal patient care pathway that can be used in primary care.

## Abstract

**Statement of the problem:** Dental abscesses are common and occasionally can progress to life-threatening cervico-fascial infections. Despite medical advances, odontogenic cervico-fascial infections (OCFIs) continue to be a threat. The potential seriousness of odontogenic infections (OIs), or dental abscesses, is frequently underestimated. General dental practitioners (GDPs) in primary care face the challenging decision of whether to refer patients to secondary care or to manage them in the community. **Purpose of the review:** This paper reviews the relevant aspects of OIs that might be helpful to primary care dental practitioners in providing a better understanding of the anatomy and pathology and aims to assist in clinical decision.

**Method:** An up-to-date review of literature on OCFIs, highlighting their potential risks with clinical examples.

**Results and conclusion:** Dental abscesses are common and continue to be a major cause for emergency hospital admission to oral and maxillofacial surgery departments. They occasionally spread to fascial spaces of the neck, potentially posing significant morbidity and mortality. GDPs are usually the first point of contact and face the challenge of recognising those at risk of developing OCFIs, which are potentially life threatening and require urgent referral for hospital treatment. We propose a patient care pathway to be used in primary care.

## Results of data gathered at a smoking cessation counselling stand in the Dublin Dental University Hospital on Mouth Cancer Awareness Day 2012

### Précis:

The smoking habits of visitors to the Dublin Dental University Hospital on Mouth Cancer Awareness Day 2012 as researched by dental hygiene students.

### Abstract

**Introduction:** The addictive aspect of smoking is well acknowledged. Research has shown that interventions by healthcare professionals have been shown to be effective and that smokers will benefit from smoking cessation counselling before, during and after their quit attempts. Dental hygienists, as part of the healthcare team, are well positioned to provide this counselling.

**Material and methods:** A questionnaire was completed by patients, staff, students and members of the public, during Mouth Cancer Awareness Day 2012 in the Dublin Dental University Hospital to assess the prevalence of smoking as well as the history of smoking and quit attempts by current and former smokers.

**Results:** The prevalence of smoking was lower than the national average. A total of 18.3% of those surveyed were smokers, 25% were former smokers, and 68% of the smokers had their first cigarette within 30 minutes of waking, indicating high dependence.

**Discussion and conclusions:** The majority of the smokers (79%) had attempted to quit. Stress was the most common reason for lapsing. The most common reasons for smoking cessation were health issues. The public is well disposed to receive information regarding smoking and the methods available to quit by healthcare professionals on health awareness days such as Mouth Cancer Awareness Day.

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## Dental amalgam: is this the end?

### Précis

The use of dental amalgam in dentistry and its health and environmental impacts have been a global matter of interest and controversy for the last decade.

### Abstract

Dental amalgam is a reliable and effective restorative material with a well-established role in modern dentistry. Throughout the years its mercury content and the risks posed to human health were main topics of interest for many scientists.

This paper offers a review of the scientific literature on the health and environmental impact of mercury in dentistry published over the last decade. A variety of peer-reviewed, epidemiological and large-scale clinical studies on dental amalgam, as well as published reports of professional and governmental bodies, were organised thematically and analysed. The most relevant findings of the aforementioned literature are reported. No reliance has been placed on unpublished work or publicly available opinions that are not scientifically based. In order to offer an appropriate view on the topic the toxicology, health impacts and possible environmental threats are briefly presented in relation to the relevant literature published in the last ten years.

It is almost unanimously accepted that dental amalgam is a safe material, with little or insignificant adverse effect on general health. However, current and mostly unfounded environmental concerns may result in the implementation of new across the board legislation that could lead to a global dental amalgam 'phase out'.

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