Dental Tribune International provides readers with dental articles that are both informative and authoritative. As the world’s first regular dental newspaper and in keeping with that ideal, we are now working with Dental Protection, the world’s biggest not-for-profit provider of dental indemnity and risk management, to create an exciting risk management feature that is being launched in this edition of Dental Tribune.

What Is Risk Management?
Most simply it can be defined as the identification and containment of anything harmful in a system or process. This is exactly the sort of strategy that is regularly used in industry, but which is equally valid in healthcare. When it is applied to dentistry, it can help to create more predictable treatment outcomes and also increased patient safety. In the process, the dental team will experience increased levels of satisfaction and far less complaints.

What Is Dental Protection?
This UK company operates in 70 countries worldwide to protect the professional reputation of 48,000 dentists, hygienists and therapists. Dental Protection is not an insurance company, it is a mutual organization owned by the members who subscribe on an annual basis. Dental Protection does not operate for profit; it is an independent commercial insurance company there are no shareholders in search of a dividend. In return for their subscription, members can ask Dental Protection to assist them when their professional integrity is challenged.

In addition to dental malpractice indemnity, Dental Protection also provides general advice 24-hours a day. There is a team of 32 dental legal advisers and an international network of lawyers available to defend members against legal challenges arising from the practise of dentistry; including the payment of compensation to patients who may have suffered as a result of negligent dental treatment provided by a member. They try to prevent problems from arising by providing educational material and risk management training. If things do go wrong, then they protect the professional reputation and integrity of dentists and other members of the dental team by supporting them with the financial cost of any complaints and claims brought against them. This is made possible by a fund of over 1 billion US dollars that is held in trust for membership.

The company started life in 1892, and over the last 112 years it has accumulated a unique database of the risks and problems associated with dental clinical practice. The increasing tendency for patients to seek private treatment is a reminder to us all that patients are now much more likely to have increased levels of expectation and to be more critical of any treatment they receive.

Fluoride Varnish
Researchers at the University of California, San Francisco School of Dentistry reported in the February issue of the Journal of Dental Research that a combination of fluoride varnish for children and parental dental health counseling reduces the rate of early childhood tooth decay. Cavity-free infants and young children were broken up into three groups of those receiving varnish twice a year, varnish once a year, or no varnish at all. The “no varnish” group was twice as likely to develop tooth decay as the “annual varnish” group and four times as likely compared to the “bi-annual varnish” group.

Ireland’s Gum Tax
Ireland has resolved a tricky dispute by forgoing a tax on chewing gum after the industry agreed to contribute 7 million Euros to a campaign aimed at reducing litter. Chewing gum makers including U.S.-based Wrigley, which has nearly 90% market share in Ireland, will spend 6 million Euros on an anti-litter education campaign and 1 million Euros on a research program aimed at making gum that is less difficult to clean up. Ireland already has a tax on plastic bags, which the government says has sharply reduced the amount of clutter on city streets and in the countryside.

Licorice Root Compounds
Licorice has been an important herb in Chinese medicine for centuries and is now being redescoved by Western medicine as a rich source of potentially beneficial compounds. In addition to being used as flavoring and sweetening agents in candy, tobaccos and beverages, compounds derived from licorice root have been shown to help fight inflammation, viruses, ulcers and even cancer.

More studies are needed before it is proven that the compounds effectively fight cavities in humans, says Danyi Lu, Ph.D., a chemist at UCLA’s School of Medicine, and Wenyuan Shi, Ph.D., a microbiologist at UCLA’s School of Dentistry. If further studies show promise, the licorice compounds could eventually be used as cavity-fighting components in mouthwash or toothpaste, they say.
The whole dental team in the process of identifying where the risks might be. To ensure the dental team feels comfortable enough to analyze its existing way of working, it is important to focus on the systems and processes that are used rather than the people who engage with them. Staff training and motivation is best achieved when any suggestion of personal criticism is excluded.

**Controlling risk**
Where risks are identified, find a modified way of working to reduce the risk.

**Risk containment**
Inherently mistakes will sometimes occur, but if the situation is correctly managed it can prevent a complaint from getting totally out of hand.

To help you apply this way of working in your own clinical environment, we will be publishing a new series of articles that describe the best risk management strategies to adopt in twelve common clinical situations:

1. Periodontal disease
2. Endodontics
3. Trauma
4. Third molars
5. Crown and bridge
6. Orthodontics
7. Full dentures
8. Adhesive dentistry
9. Complaint handling
10. Implants
11. Fixed prosthodontics
12. Treating complex cases

The articles are extremely easy to read and are designed to be shared with other members of the dental team. They have already proved extremely popular with dentists and hygienists who are members of Dental Protection. Although they can only be obtained indemnity from the company if you work in a country where English law is the basis of the legal system, you can still benefit from their excellent risk management program.

Full details of all the risk management material published by Dental Protection can be found on their website, www.dental-protection.org.

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**Thailand Rejects Dental Treatment Scheme**

The Thai government has rejected a dental treatment scheme, following the SSO’s decision to provide unlimited coverage for members of Social Security. The services, which were introduced in January, covered extractions, fillings, and dentures. The Council proposed that the SSO recoup private dental clinics to join the scheme in order to solve the long waiting lists at hospitals. To reduce the workload, one dentist, Dr. B. Holly Broadbent, said that the implementation of the scheme would cost an additional 5 million Baht (50,000 Euros).

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**Cone beam computed tomography (CBCT)** increasingly has become the newest technology for orthodontists to use in diagnosing complicated oral health problems.

Reporting on four new CBCT systems in the December issue of the Journal of Orthodontics are J. Martin Palomo and Mark Hans from the Department of Orthodontics at Case Western Reserve University and Dr. B. Holly Broadbent (Case Director of the Bolton Study).

**Modular Training**
Dental Protection recently produced a series of clinical modules, each one devised in a different clinical topic and designed to help today’s dentists learn from the mistakes of the past. By identifying problems ahead of time and adopting a modified way of behaviour to reduce or eliminate the problem, every clinician can learn from their or her own risk. However, it is not something that the dentist can do in isolation. The philosophy should involve all the team members in the clinical environment.

**Three Stages of Risk Management**

**Understanding risk**
If you wish to manage risk in a clinical setting, you need to involve the American Dental Association and the British Orthodontic Society to use techniques that reduce exposure to radiation.

- The new 3-D images capture pictures of hard tissues and most soft tissue components, except the color texture of the skin’s surface, enabling orthodontists to detect higher incidences of oral abnormalities such as oral cysts and buried teeth.
- The improved images allow for better airway analyses and management of conditions related to sleep apnea and enlarged adenoids.
- Images from the CBCT technology have additional applications in other specialties of dentistry such as in placing new implants that are increasingly used in place of dentures, remedial efforts for TMD and for reconstruction of cleft palates and lips.

The researchers report, “The future in orthodontic imaging seems exciting as we discover new frontiers, and as the paradigm in dentistry shifts from landmarks, lines, distances and angles to surfaces, areas and volumes.”

They also added that “Orthodontists are beginning to appreciate the advantages that the third dimension gives to clinical diagnosis, treatment planning and patient education.”

**About Case Western Reserve University**
Located in Cleveland, Case offers 126 years of leading research institutions. Founded in 1826 and shaped by the unique merging of the Case Institute of Technology and Western Reserve University, Case is distinguished by its strengths in education, research, service, and experimental learning. Located in Cleveland, Case offers nationally recognized programs in the Arts and Sciences, Dental Medicine, Engineering, Law, Management, Medicine, Nursing, and Social Work. 

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**Dental Protection**

A modular training service in the journal Dental Tribune International has been produced by the Journal of Orthodontics. This series of modules is designed to help today’s dentists learn from the mistakes of the past. By identifying problems ahead of time and adopting a modified way of behaviour to reduce or eliminate the problem, every clinician can learn from their or her own risk. It is not something that the dentist can do in isolation. The philosophy should involve all the team members in the clinical environment.

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**What’s in the market for 3-D dental imaging?**

_Dentist report on new computerized tomography systems_

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- The technology adheres to radiation guidelines provided by the whole dental team in the process of identifying where the risks might be. To ensure the dental team feels comfortable enough to analyze its existing way of working, it is important to focus on the systems and processes that are used rather than the people who engage with them. Staff training and motivation is best achieved when any suggestion of personal criticism is excluded.
- The technology generates a wide range of images, including hard and soft tissue components, except the color texture of the skin’s surface, enabling orthodontists to detect higher incidences of oral abnormalities such as oral cysts and buried teeth.
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