Observations……

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Travels around NB while doing radiation surveys affords the opportunity to have many informal chats with those who work with the X-ray equipment. We appreciate these discussions which are totally informal and often very informative.

A topic that we hear about often is, of course, expressions of concern about radiation safety and we are always happy to talk about it. Related to this topic is an issue that is of concern to us and we want to share this with you.

We all know that some patients who are in need of dental care find it very difficult to either remain still during an exam or hold the imaging plate in their mouths for sufficient time to obtain proper images. Many practitioners feel the need to offer direct assistance and do so by either holding the imaging plate in place or supporting the patient in other ways during exposures. This is not best practice and here is why:

During our surveys we make direct measurements of the actual amounts of radiation that are used to create x-ray images. Hence, we know the radiation risk associated with each type of examination. We also know that there are legally established limits to the amount of risk associated with routine dental radiography.

The one thing that we do know, and this is not well understood by many of you is that it is very easy to exceed your personal legal limits of risk by offering direct assistance to these difficult patients. If this is done, for example only a very few times each year your legal limits will be exceeded and we have recorded this directly.

We ask, therefore, that you seriously consider alternate ways to approach this difficult situation.

We suggest that you all have a serious discussion among yourselves and find alternate ways to

<u>How to Reduce Your Risk of Exposure When Offering Assistance to Patients:</u>

1. Use the services of a family or friend as they usually accompany a difficult patient.

2. Wear protective apparel. (Lead apron with at least 0.5 mm lead equivalent protection)

3. If it is absolutely necessary, then stay out of the primary beam, stand behind the patient and as far away as possible; wear protective gloves. Let someone else operate the exposure control so that you can best attend to your needs and those of the patient.

4. Use the lowest exposure possible by making the proper adjustments on the x-ray machine.

5. Use a dosimeter to monitor your daily exposure.

6. Have a plan in place to address the situation.