



Huntington Village Implant & Oral Surgeons PETER H. PRUDEN, D.D.S*, P.C. & Associates

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Don't Miss out
on our **Next**
Seminar

Medical Clearance

Gary CJ, Glick M: Medical clearance: An issue of professional autonomy, not a crutch. J Am Dent Assoc
143:1180-1181, 2012

Thursday

Please note:

**May 22nd,
2014**

3 CE Credits

“Removable
Partial Over-
dentures An
Underutilized
Modality Let
Wax Be Your
Guide:
Avoiding
Clinical Com-
plications”

Presenter:
Kenneth S.
Kurtz, D.D.S.

Registration
Dinner 5:30 pm

Lecture
6:00 - 9:00 pm

Dolan Family
Health Center

284 Pulaski
Road,
Greenlawn, NY

This course is
sponsored by
the Suffolk
County Dental
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State Dental
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nated PACE
Program Pro-
vider for the
Academy of
General
Dentistry.

Clinical Significance— Medical clearance can be used as a crutch or justification for dentists when they feel they do not have enough knowledge or judgment to provide safe, appropriate care for a patient. **However, the dentist remains accountable** for his or her actions and decisions even when he or she has consulted physician for information.

Background— Oral health care professionals have been highly successful in helping many patients reach an advanced age with a functional, relatively healthy dentition. Although these patients often develop chronic medical conditions that can increase the risk of experiencing an adverse outcome to routine dental care, dentists can consult with medical health care providers to gather more information and advice on how best to manage care. However, dentists may misunderstand the purpose and legal effect of such consultations. Although the physician supplies the information, the dentist remains the one who will make the decision regarding appropriate dental care and is accountable for the outcome.

Guidelines for consultations— The medical consult is a way to obtain needed information so the dentist can make the best treatment decision. Nonspecific consultation requests tend to be misinterpreted, so all the requests should be specific. For example, rather than asking if a dental patient can tolerate an extraction while taking anticoagulation therapy, the dentist should inquire about the specific international normalized ratio or prothrombin time for the patient. This means that dentists must be aware of which medical conditions might require modifications for dental treatment. Once they have obtained the information, they need to involve the patient in the informed consent process and discuss risks, benefits, and alternatives to the recommended procedure. The dentist is responsible for balancing relevant evidence with patient needs and desires and choosing a clinical course that is in the best interests of the patient.

Legal Implications— If the oral health care professional fails to obtain the necessary information, falling short of the standard of care, and the patient suffers injury associated with the condition, the dentist is legally liable. Many dentists may erroneously assume that they limit their liability by requesting “medical clearance” from the patient’s physician for a procedure. However, liability for the treatment given does not shift to the physician; it remains with the dentist. The physician is accountable for the accuracy of the information he or she provides and the care that he or she renders, but not for the decisions or actions of the treating dentist.

Discussion— Only treating dentists can provide clearance for the treatment they provide. They function as primary caregivers of oral health care so they have the professional autonomy and control of their treatment decisions. As a result, they are accountable for their conduct and cannot abdicate responsibility for treatment decisions to consulting physicians.