



the wimbledon dentist

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PPE at The Wimbledon Dentist

My name is Aoife Boland and I'm the owner of the practice.

Firstly, may I thank you for continuing to be a member of our patient base family during these difficult times. It has been absolutely heartwarming for me to meet and hear from some of you since lockdown ended. I'm glad you are all ok! And thank you for the lovely messages.

Our previous only focus - your oral health - has been sideswiped somewhat this year, and now, like everyone, we must find a way forward through the new way of living that we are all deciding and adapting to.

Since I built and opened this in 2011, we have strived to become our patients' local family surgery and everything that our patients think about us definitely interests us.

May I take a few minutes of your time to explain this gnarly subject of "PPE".

PPE: now a household phrase, and certainly a horrible reminder of news features of earlier this year...We as dental surgery workers (dentists, nurses and hygienists) of course have been always wearing our own level of PPE . This may change a bit over the years but we are as used to and comfortable having to wear a level of barrier material as we are with dealing with infectious diseases. We are specially trained in "cross infection control" according to our highly-regulated industry's guidelines, and do not pass this cost directly on to patients. We get told what to wear and wear it.

It is an operating cost, and it's traditionally low enough as to not be a problem.

We now are mandated to wear a whole new level of this, details below, which exact list was supplied to us only as the government announced that we were able to reopen. So we have had to purchase what we can get of this list issued by PHE since early June , when rumours started to be more concrete about exactly what the Public Health England would advise us to wear. I was actually trying to source the FFP3 respirators (new special face masks)from January when the news of another coronavirus from China was emerging. Unfortunately, most manufacturing hubs are in China for this market.

The supply lines to healthcare in the UK were initially not at ALL protected in the UK. This lead to a terrible time for the NHS hospitals while they struggled to protect their staff while battling the situation, as I'm sure you had seen on tv. Then, some long time later, way too late in my opinion, NHS trustworthy supply lines were eked out and ringfenced. By the middle of June, we were told we could reopen, and then some of our regulatory and advisory bodies started to issue the recommendations to our industry concerning how we could get the practices to reopen safely, focussing a lot on different PPE. The focus is on "AGP's", (procedures that aerosolise spit and blood that could contain the virus)which are generated by most dental treatments, such as you spitting in the spittoon, us drilling teeth, us using the usual ultrasonic cleaner to clean teeth. We sit within this aerosol to do our



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work.

Every dental surgery in the UK then tried to access these highly specific items, at the same time, and every day since, including tonight!

For a lot of these products we were of course not the only ones trying to find them - every doctor's surgery, carehome, NHS dentistry clinic for example are all searching for PPE at the same time, and across Europe.

We, unlike NHS Dental Clinics, are NOT government subsidised in any way.

The actual cost to our practice to clad the dentist and the nurse in the mandated PPE for one session with a patient that creates an aerosol at Pandemic Alert Level 4/3 (we are now at Alert Level 3) started off in June as being over £52. We either could buy it at these prices and reopen to help our patients or stay closed.

I reopened after extensive staff retraining. We lost some staff and let some go, which was so sad with us being a little strong independent team.

I decided that we could simply not ask patients to pay the true cost. We fixed it at £40 at the end of June for dental procedures.

We fixed it as £15 for hygiene procedures.

As soon as we purchased more of the exact correct items for our protocols at lower prices, we reduced the fee that patients are asked to contribute towards.

This dropped to £23 for dentist-led procedures from mid-August and is now about to be reduced further to £14.50 for dentist-led procedures. For hygienist procedures this will now drop from £15 to £9.

This cost to us must continue to go down as the market contains more of these items and their price goes down. We have reduced the fee we ask the patients to pay twice already. We do as soon we find cheaper supplies, that are still bonafide. It is quite literally a daily grind to search but it's now one of our new "normal" admin tasks. So much of the products are non-certified, ie : fakes. The "cheap stuff" (eg plastic aprons) has in some cases gone up in price by more than 20 times.

We wear a lot more than those simply in proximity to Covid 19 patients in a hospital for example owing to the aerosolising effect described above. It's not our choice.

We are used to working our daily lives within this aerosol with other viruses such as Hepatitis B, HIV, or bacterial infections such as TB. But we aren't previously mandated to wear this new level of PPE as now.

The list is:

Surgical full length gown(washable)(£30 each when bought)

Disposable plastic apron on top of this,

Disposable plastic foot booties and disposable hair covering

Disposable plastic sleeves

Safety goggles (not a new item)

FFP3 respirators (£14 each when bought , individually "fit-tested" to each member's face and almost impossible to find since May!)

Surgical type IIR mask on top of this mask (used to be 5p each, now 98p each)

Full face visor (covering the forehead and top of head) (varying expense depending



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on quality, up to 9£)

NHS healthcare has access to low priced items and at a constant supply (as they should). We do not.

So we are waiting for the government to drop the Alert Level to 2 when most of this PPE will be not necessary, and what remains of it will not be charged to the patients.

We daily search for cheaper supplies - this will bring it down too.

Thank you very much for reading this.

Thank you very much for continuing to come to choose us as your trusted dentists.

Thanks for continuing to send your own friends and family to us.

You have to do what's right for you. Times are strange and scary and the economy is bleak - we must all try to live how we can. We at the practice have try our very best to keep the staff safe, our wonderful patients safe, and try to weather the storm.

We shall see you soon we hope, and if not soon, then stay safe and healthy!

All the very best

Aoife Boland