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Dental X-Ray Safety

Patient safety and protection while providing the best possible diagnostic and dental treatment is of paramount importance to the dentists of BC.

The British Columbia Dental Association (BCDA) is proactive in helping protect dental patients from ionizing radiation associated with the use of dental x-ray equipment. X-ray imaging can be pivotal to the proper diagnosis and treatment of serious dental disease. Central to our x-ray policy recommendations is the ALARA principle: keep the dose **As Low As Reasonably Achievable**.

Since 2000, the BCDA has administered an x-ray inspection program for member dental offices in BC. Dental x-ray equipment is tested at least once every five years to ensure it is properly maintained and calibrated to help ensure that patients are not exposed to more radiation than necessary.

With the recent increase in use of Cone Beam Computed Tomography (CBCT), the Association has been proactive in working with the BC Centre for Disease Control and WorkSafeBC in the development of guidelines on radiation protection and quality assurance applicable to this new technology.

Recently, media have referenced the study reported in the journal *Cancer*, 2012. The study relates past recollections of x-ray exposures of patients diagnosed with meningioma tumors. Several reputable professional organizations and experts have criticized the study's findings and questioned the study's validity noting:

- Current dosages of radiation are less today than they were when the study participants were children.
- Study data was self-reported by patients (remembering how many bitewing x-rays they received as kids).

Regardless of the validity of the study, excess exposure to ionizing radiation is known to be harmful. The BCDA continues to recommend that dentists only prescribe dental x-rays when the benefits of the diagnostic procedure outweigh the relative health risks to the patient.