

Media Release

24 January, 2018

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District and Dental Council of NSW advising Cronulla Dental Surgery patients

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD) is contacting patients who have undergone invasive dental procedures at a Cronulla dental practice.

The Dental Council of NSW and NSW Health conducted an investigation and found evidence of poor cleaning and sterilisation of dental equipment used in the practice of Dr Nicholas Southall, of Cronulla Dental Surgery.

No instances of patient infection arising from treatment at the Cronulla Dental Surgery have been identified.

However, as a precaution, NSW Health has written to approximately 930 patients advising them that there is a low risk of having contracted a blood-borne virus and recommended that they visit their GP for testing. An additional 2,500 patients whose records did not indicate invasive procedures have been sent a letter recommending that they consult their general practitioner if they have any concerns.

Cronulla Dental Surgery is located at Shop 3, 20 Gerrale St, Cronulla.

Following a complaint to the Dental Council of NSW on 29 September 2017, a public health investigation was carried out at the Cronulla Dental Surgery from October to December 2017.

Dr Southall must not practice dentistry at this time. The Dental Council placed conditions on Dr Southall's registration on 24 October 2017 requiring him not to practise subject to review, and since that time his registration has lapsed so he can no longer practise as a dentist.

Any patient complaints regarding Dr Southall, should be made to the Dental Council at mail@dentalcouncil.nsw.gov.au.

Professor Mark Ferson, Director SESLHD Public Health Unit said the potential risk of infection to patients is low and only applied to those who underwent invasive procedures, such as those involving a needle or other instrument piercing the skin, gums or tooth pulp/root and other procedures where bleeding may have occurred.

"Patients who only had simple check-ups, an x-ray, or attended to get dentures should not be at risk, but those with doubts or concerns should see their GP," he said.

Dr William O'Reilly, President of the Dental Council of NSW said that the Council takes complaints about infection control breaches very seriously and can inspect practices where a concern has been raised about a practitioner.

“An audit conducted across NSW by the Council in 2016 identified that the overwhelming majority of dental practitioners demonstrated sound knowledge of infection control guidelines, procedures and obligations,” Dr O’Reilly said.

“The Council continues to actively manage infection control issues and to assist practitioners in understanding infection control guidelines and obligations.”

The Council has developed a number of tools and resources on how practitioners can prevent or minimise the risk or spread of infectious diseases in dental practice.

For more information

If you were a patient of Dr Southall and have any questions about your risk of infection, please contact the Information Line on **1800 610 344** between 9am and 7pm, Monday to Friday.

Further information is available at

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/alerts/Pages/dental-practice-cronulla.aspx>

Information about hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV infections can be found by following the links to a factsheet on each specific disease at the NSW Health website: <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/default.aspx>.

Information about the Dental Council of NSW and resources on infection control can be found on the Council website at <https://www.dentalcouncil.nsw.gov.au/>.