

Thousands of patients recalled in Britain over HIV fears

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Thousands of dental patients in Britain are being recalled for tests over fears that they could have been infected with HIV or other blood-borne viruses, health officials said Wednesday.

NHS England said 22,000 people may have been put at risk over a period of 32 years by poor hygiene practices at a single dental surgery in the city of Nottingham in central England.

Desmond D'Mello was suspended in June after a whistleblower, concerned about clinical standards, secretly filmed the dentist at work at the Daybrook Dental Practice.

Health authorities said they were investigating "apparent breaches of infection control procedures" by D'Mello, including failing to wash his hands and change gloves between patients.

All patients treated by him are being urged to undergo screening for HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C.

Officials stressed that D'Mello himself was not infected with any blood-borne viruses but said his patients could have been put at "low risk" due to "apparent multiple failures in cross-infection control standards".

Independent experts stressed that there was only a small risk of infection.

Professor Andrew Lee, a public health expert at the University of Sheffield, said: "In reality I think the risk would be quite low and I think it is important that the public maintains a degree of perspective here about the real actual risk posed to them.

"It is easy to conflate our fears about visiting the dentist with these isolated incidents of poor practice," he said.

The interim orders committee of the General Dental Council, the body that regulates dental professionals, has suspended D'Mello for 18 months pending an investigation.

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