

HIV test urged for 7,000 US dental patients

March 28 2013, by Justin Juozapavicius

(AP)—Health officials on Thursday urged an Oklahoma oral surgeon's patients to undergo hepatitis and HIV testing, saying filthy conditions behind his office's tidy facade posed a threat to his 7,000 clients and made him a "menace to the public health."

The Oklahoma Board of Dentistry said Thursday that state and county health inspectors went to Dr. W. Scott Harrington's practice after a patient with no other known risk factors tested positive for both hepatitis C and the virus that causes AIDS. Inspectors found multiple sterilization issues at Harrington's offices, including cross-contamination of needles and other instruments and the use of a separate, rusty, set of instruments for patients who were known to carry infectious diseases, according to a complaint.

Harrington voluntarily closed his offices in Tulsa and suburban Owasso and is cooperating with investigators, said Kaitlin Snider, a spokeswoman for the Tulsa Health Department. He faces a hearing April 19 and could lose his license.

Snider said letters would be sent Friday to 7,000 patients recommending testing for [hepatitis B](#), [hepatitis C](#) and HIV. The agencies say it is rare for blood-borne infections to spread in occupational settings but that tests are important.

Rogers said that as an [oral surgeon](#), Harrington routinely does invasive procedures that involve "pulling teeth, open wounds, open blood vessels."

The Dentistry Board complaint says Harrington and his staff told investigators that a "high population of known infectious disease carrier patients" received dental care from him.

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