Despite numerous technical advances in recent years, many occupational health problems still persist in modern dentistry. These include percutaneous exposure incidents (PEI); exposure to infectious diseases (including bioaerosols), radiation, dental materials, and noise; musculoskeletal disorders; dermatitis and respiratory disorders; eye injuries; and psychological problems. PEI remain a particular concern, as there is an almost constant risk of exposure to serious infectious agents. Strategies to minimise PEI and their consequences should continue to be employed, including sound infection control practices, continuing education and hepatitis B immunisation. As part of any infection control protocols, dentists should continue to utilise personal protective measures and appropriate sterilisation or other high-level disinfection techniques. Aside from biological hazards, dentists continue to suffer a high prevalence of musculoskeletal disorders (MSD), especially of the back, neck and shoulders. To fully understand the nature of these problems, further studies are needed to identify causative factors and other correlates of MSD. Continuing education and investigation of appropriate interventions to help reduce the prevalence of MSD and contact dermatitis are also needed. For these reasons, it is therefore important that dentists remain constantly informed regarding up-to-date measures on how to deal with newer technologies and dental materials.
Dentists and other dental personnel experience unique occupational exposures, including exposure to infectious organisms, dusts, gases, and fumes. It is possible that occupational exposures contributed to this cluster. After this analysis, another IPF case was diagnosed in a dentist treated at this specialty clinic. Further investigation of the risk for dental personnel and IPF is warranted to develop strategies for prevention of potentially harmful exposures. Top. Acknowledgments. John Wood, Respiratory Health Division, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, CDC. Top. Conflict... Leggat PA, Kedjarune U, Smith DR. Occupational health problems in modern dentistry: a review. Ind Health 2007;45:611–21. CrossRef PubMed.