

Book Reviews

Orthodontic Radiographs: Guidelines (Second Edition 2001)

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Conflicting trends in public opinion present orthodontists with a dilemma. In an increasingly litigious climate, where radiographs provide an important means of medico-legal defence, there is also increasing public awareness of the risks of radiation exposure. This revised text helps to provide a solution by presenting clinical guidelines that take into account the latest European Union Directives and UK regulations. Much useful information has been condensed into a relatively slim booklet, whose contents are presented logically, covering a variety of relevant topics such as film dosage and the indications for the most commonly used films. The almost forgotten low dosage lateral oblique and bi-molar films also get a mention.

In places the guidelines err on the side of over-caution and tend to be restrictive. In the presence of treatment waiting lists, is it really best to delay taking radiographs until treatment begins? In contrast to the recommendations, many orthodontists would consider it essential to see a mid-lateral cephalogram, to identify anchorage requirements, as well as to seek reassurance about the condition of incisor roots. Here the recommended collimated film does not seem in any way useful—with no means of orientating the film to head posture or cranial base structures. The statement that such cephalometric monitoring films ‘must be traced and digitised’ is unjustified. Additionally it would

seem appropriate to take cephalometric films prior to the completion of treatment in more than just ‘some’ cases.

The justification, or otherwise, for taking radiographs for teaching is only lightly touched upon, and the increasingly important topic of consent is not addressed—should one obtain written permission before obtaining radiographs? And what should one do about unaccompanied youngsters requiring radiographs?

The topic of digital radiography is introduced and useful information about the transfer and storage of films is presented, with reference to UK medico-legal requirements. The ‘Quality Assurance’ section is particularly helpful and the guidelines are completed by reference and further reading lists.

This certainly is a worthwhile publication and the guidelines are essentially sound, although inevitably many orthodontists will find something with which to disagree. Whilst in a legal sense ‘non-compliance does not necessarily equate to negligence’, the guidelines do impose an ethical obligation, in that any clinical deviations would need to be justified and ultimately, the editors appear to have succeeded in limiting the number of clinical situations in which deviation from their guidelines could be defended.

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