

# Watch out Sir Alan!

## Splash-back contamination A new concept to beat it

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*A dental hygienist from Cumbria comes up with a new winning idea in the fight against cross infection.*

I still despair that despite 21 years experience working in the dental profession I continue to struggle with unsightly splash back contamination. Attempting to keep tunics clean and free from deposits can be a nightmare. As we all know even a routine scale and polish can leave unsightly marks from prophy paste, air polish powder and, of course, the odd splattering of blood and saliva.

Convinced that I surely cannot be alone in the daily challenge of keeping that clean professional appearance all day, I took some positive action and started to develop a solution to this problem. With such emphasis on cross infection control, I feel that this new concept has its place along side our gloves and masks. We would not consider treating a patient without the protection of our gloves and mask but more often than not we carry a lot of infectious material within the fibres of our tunics. When you consider this it is logical that we protect our clinical tunics.

My solution to this problem is 'Medi-Mates'. I came up with the design nearly four years ago. The idea came to me when I started to tuck tissue into the neck of my tunic to capture the splatters. On the odd occasion it worked but my main problem was keeping it there! Most of the time I would lose it at some point during the treatment, which proved to be frustrating. It was fairly obvious that it would work if it was self-adhesive.

My first step in producing this essential piece of kit was to try to patent the idea. At this point I chose



to involve a patent attorney, which was a costly business. I finally submitted the drawings and design idea in the new year of 2007. This process is still on-going, with a patent pending still in force!

My next step was to try to find an appropriate manufacturer to produce some prototypes. This proved to be harder than it sounds and after a lot of research and meetings with several manufacturers I managed to put my design and concept forward to a reliable one – or so I thought! Just when I thought I had cracked it, I was let down by their 'finished' design, which was not what I expected! So, it was back to the drawing board and about six months later I managed to find a new company and organise a meeting to explain my idea.

The next 18 months were spent desperately trying to achieve a quality prototype product. It took so many attempts to get the finished product right – it had to be sticky enough to adhere to tunics without damaging the clothing, absorbent enough without being too heavy and discrete but quick and easy to apply. Most importantly of all it had to be disposable.

Eventually we successfully sourced the right kind of material for the bibs. Some we had looked at had proved to have adhesive which was either too strong, or not adhesive enough and it so did not work effectively.

My next challenge was the 'small' matter of designing the dispenser box for them.

Finally, in December 2009, I received the boxes with my finished product in them, a real cause for celebration. What a day that was!

I can now say that Medi-Mates can be used by the whole clinical team. They would not necessarily be used for every patient, but for some treatment these bibs are invaluable. As a dental hygienist, I would not be without them and find that I wear them all the time.

The other extremely 'useful' thing about them is that they are discrete. Often patients are unaware that you are wearing them, which is ideal as it does not put fear or panic into the patient. They can be applied discretely and removed just as quickly, all before the patient has time to sit up and rinse!

It is my plan that Medi-Mates will be sold in boxes of 50. I hope to start promoting them at various dental shows in the near future and hopefully an interested dental supplier will be found. I am hoping that in the future Medi-Mates will come in two sizes – medium and large.

**For more information about them, please contact me by email:  
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