

Office drugs and substances can be misused by dentists and their staff members in various ways, including:

- ◆ writing prescriptions for non-dental reasons;
- ◆ misdirecting drug samples;
- ◆ using office drug supplies for personal use;
- ◆ after hours recreational use of nitrous-oxide;
- ◆ any combination of the above.

#### PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES

There are a number of strategies and safeguards that can serve to deter, to the extent possible, personal use of in-office drugs and substances by dentists and their staff.

The following are some preventive strategies:

- ◆ Institute strict inventory control of all controlled drugs and substances.
- ◆ Keep drugs in a locked storage cupboard, along with a drug log that accounts for the dispensing of all narcotic or controlled drugs and substances.
- ◆ Keep careful control of blank prescription pads and NEVER pre-sign prescription sheets.
- ◆ At the end of the day, either lock nitrous oxide tanks in a safe location or control access to the turn-off key/wrench.
- ◆ Use staff training sessions and meetings to discuss the dangers of drug and substance abuse, to remind staff of the safeguards and protocols in the office to prevent misuse of office supplies, and to provide information about resources that are available to dental professionals to assist with wellness issues.

## WORKPLACE SAFETY AND NITROUS OXIDE USE

The College's Guidelines on the Use of Sedation and General Anaesthesia in Dental Practice represent the standard of practice relative to the use of the various sedation and anaesthesia modalities used in Ontario.

While the prime purpose of these Guidelines is to ensure, to the extent possible, that patient safety is not compromised in any way by setting out training, staffing, monitoring, equipment, recordkeeping and emergency preparedness requirements, there is a workplace safety dimension to the document as well.

This component relates to the requirement for scavenging systems to be in place whenever inhalant gases (nitrous oxide-oxygen, anaesthetic agents) are utilized. Studies have shown that the health of female dentists/employees can be compromised if the exhaled gases are not properly controlled and are inhaled by staff.

For this reason, we want to remind all Ontario dentists of the requirement for properly installed and maintained scavenger systems in facilities where nitrous oxide-oxygen and anaesthetic gases are utilized.

