

# How staff training can improve perceptions and knowledge on waste management in dentistry

**Précis:** This project has highlighted that training healthcare staff on appropriate waste segregation and its associated environmental impact leads to improved staff knowledge and awareness.

## Abstract

**Introduction:** The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland suggests that implementation of sustainable waste practices within dentistry is a small but significant step to tackle the profession's environmental burden. Poor waste segregation can lead to increased atmospheric methane gas, which is one of the largest contributors to climate change.

**Objectives:** To measure staff perceptions/knowledge on healthcare waste management. To improve staff knowledge of appropriate waste management in dentistry and their understanding of the environmental impact of incorrect disposal of dental waste.

**Methods:** Within a UK secondary care dental hospital setting, a questionnaire was issued to staff to ascertain current knowledge and opinions on dental waste management. Several methods aiming to improve staff knowledge were implemented prior to issuing a second survey.

**Results:** Of initial respondents, 73% answered that they think about environmental sustainability daily/weekly. However, 56% lacked confidence in their knowledge of waste segregation. They perceived that the biggest healthcare contributors to carbon footprint were lack of recycling facilities, patient/staff travel, and plastic disposal. Following teaching, 95% of those who attended had increased knowledge and awareness.

**Conclusions:** This project highlighted that many dental staff do not feel that they have appropriate training on correct waste management as part of their induction. The benefits of improving staff knowledge on sustainable waste practices cannot be underestimated due to the growing global concern of climate change. This project has highlighted that teaching led to improvement in staff knowledge and confidence.

*Journal of the Irish Dental Association Science* February/March 2026;2(1):8-13

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