

DEPARTMENT OF  
VETERANS AFFAIRS

# Memorandum

Date: JAN 23 2018

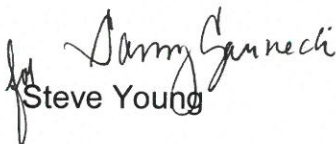
From: Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management (10N)

Subj: The Use of Glass Bead Warmers in Veterans Health Administration Facilities

To: Network Directors (10N1-23)  
Chief Medical Officers (10N1-23)  
Quality Management Officers (10N1-23)  
VISN Sterile Processing Service Leads (10N1-23)

Thru: Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Clinical Operations (10NC)

1. This memorandum serves as official guidance concerning the use of Glass Bead Warmers in Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Facilities. Glass Bead Warmers provide risk for cross-contamination; therefore, they are not authorized for use in VHA Medical Centers.
2. Glass Bead Warmers are commonly found in Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) clinics and used to warm and defog mirrors during laryngeal examinations. Glass Bead Warmers utilize small glass beads that are heated to approximately 240° to 270° C and a lid as a dust cover. Glass bead instructions for use only require routine cleaning. However, the lid must remain open when the unit is on resulting in the risk of dust and debris buildup on glass beads. Glass beads may also become contaminated during the defogging process and therefore provide added risk of cross-contamination.
3. Alternative methods for defogging ENT mirrors should be utilized. Commercially available defogging products are available for use via the VA supply chain. Additionally, use of hydrogen peroxide as a defogger has been found to be safe, easy to use and cost effective.
4. References for this guidance include: Centers for Disease Control Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report for Infection Control in Dental Health-Care Settings 2003; Indirect Laryngoscopy—Hydrogen Peroxide as Defogger, Sudheer, C.P. et al., Journal of Evolution of Medical and Dental Sciences, December 2013, 49(2); the Food and Drug Administration and VHA National Dental Infection Control Policy.
5. For questions pertaining to this memorandum, please contact Teresa Wells, Director National Program Office for Sterile Processing at [Teresa.Wells3@va.gov](mailto:Teresa.Wells3@va.gov).

  
Steve Young