APRIL 13, 1995

Dentists warned against infections

Dentists and their clients risk

contracting various diseases,

some of them incurable. participants at s recent health science

conference were warned

Ironically dentists who fail to,

use protective gear face greater

risks than their patients, who

risk contracting diseases such as

Hepatitis B and the Aids-causing

human immune deficiency virus (HIV).

“A dentist without protective

gadgets stands an even greeter

chance of being infected due to

aerosols from hand-pieces used

during surgery,” said Mr Ngugi

Muthotho, in a paper presented

at the 16th AfrIcan Health Sciences Congress which was recently held at the Kenya Medical

Research Institute (Kemri) headquarter in Nairobi.

Presenting a paper titled

“Health hazards from dental

chair in public and private

clinics,” Muthotho said that before the advent of Aids the dental profession faced no serious profesional risk.

The implementation of the

Global Strategy for Health for

All by the Year 2000, Volume 1.

a World Health Organization

(WHO) publication, states that

while oral- health in developed

countries has been improving,

that of developing countries has

worsened since 1980. Mort dental clinic are too busy to routinely disinfect chairs end instruments after each patient

Unofficial sources at Kenyatta

National hospital (KNH) confided to IRIS that the hospital’s

dental unit receives 130 patients

a day. Experts blame rising numbers of dental patients partly on

changing consumption patterns,

especially high sugar content

foods resulting in dental decay.

A recant survey in public and

private dental clinic in Nairobi

revealed that dental surgery

hand-pieces including those

coming into contact with the surgeon had bacteria even after being disinfected with alcohol.

Water from the pieces are also

contaminated, as were sinks and

benches.

While patients risk infection

from contaminated instruments,

dentists are at risk because of

their constant exposure to blood

and other body fluids. “Very little

contaminated fluid is needed to

infect a person. Mututho told

IRIS.

The dentist coat was found to

be contaminated with alpha

streptococcus bacteria, showing

the serious risk he faces from infections such as hepatitis B HIV

and Tuberculosis (TB0. “Such

cross infection of patient could

easily be avoided if broad spectrum

disinfectants able to kill virus and bacteria with a short time were used said Mututho

Nairobi clinic use catalog and

70 per cent alcohol both of which not kill all micro organisms.

“Despite their ineffectiveness,

dentists are reluctant to abandon Ineffective disinfectants ore

these traditional disinfectants,”

Muthutho explained. .

Microbiologist have found

that the most effective disinfectant

during this era of Aids and

opportunistic infections are