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Health Professionals at Serious Risk of HPV Transmission without Smoke Evacuation

Surgeons are at risk of serious health issues including types of throat cancer when exposed to laser plumes without proper smoke evacuation.

The potential for HPV transmission through laser plume has been researched by various authors over the years, however a study based on HPV positive tonsillar cancer in two laser surgeons has revealed that there is a high possibility of developing oropharyngeal squamous cell carcinomas through the long-term occupational exposure to laser plume.

Two male gynaecologists aged 53 and 62 were both diagnosed with HPV-16 positive tonsillar cancer after years of carrying out laser surgery procedures with carbon dioxide lasers. Both surgeons had no other significant risk factors, and both reported poor ventilation within their occupational environments.

Surgical smoke consists of 95% vapour which acts as a means of transportation for other highly toxic components. These particles cause irritation to the nose and throat; vaporised tissue and cigarette smoke contain similar elements such as carbon monoxide and hydrogen cyanides. As well as Carcinoma such as that of the Tonsils, other potential health hazards caused by the inhaling of laser smoke include nausea, vomiting, hepatitis, eye irritation and anaemia.

In many parts of the world localised smoke evacuation with high-performance filters is a requirement by law for the health and safety of surgeons and health professionals in the operating room. This legislation does not apply to the UK.

It is recommended by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health to use portable smoke evacuators fitted with a High Efficiency Particulate Air Filter or equivalent that is regularly replaced, in addition to general room ventilation.

The FUMOVAC 900 by Maquet is a high-performance, compact smoke-evacuation unit and offers a high but extremely quiet displacement of up to 500 l/min in normal mode and 900 l/min in turbo mode. The device is simple to operate with easy filter change, and guarantees sufficiently good evacuation performance with greater distances and long suction tubes.

The compact design ensures a flexible, space-saving integration into HF towers and ceiling supply units. The filter has a service life of up to 32 hours and includes a pneumatic foot switch to save energy, and an automatic HF remote switch activator that recognises when the smoke evacuation is required.

For more information on Maquet's FUMOVAC contact us at Single Use Surgical at info@susl.co.uk

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