

LOCAL

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USD 250 screenings raise questions

By Nikki Patrick | THE MORNING SUN

Pittsburg dentist Daniel Minnis is questioning the methods used during a dental screening Friday at Pittsburg High School.

He expressed his concerns in an e-mail sent to members of the Pittsburg USD 250 Board of Education.

Dental screenings, which are required by state law for youngsters who have not recently seen a dentist, were conducted in other USD 250 schools by a specially trained team from Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas. However, the PHS screening was performed by Robert Herron, DDS, Columbus.

"First of all, why is a Columbus dentist screening USD 250 students?" Minnis asked.

He also said that the majority of students he spoke with informed him that the screening dentist did not wear gloves or use a dental mirror for the examinations.

Other students questioned could not recall whether gloves were worn, but did note that no mirrors were used.

"Not wearing gloves is a violation of universal precautions to prevent cross contamination of patients," Minnis said. "We've had a lot of strep throat around Pittsburg this season, not to mention colds and flu."

He said that disposable gloves are not expensive. "They cost about \$4 for a box of 100," Minnis said. "And three years ago I purchased 30,000 dental mirrors for CHC/SEK, and a fresh mirror is used for each student screened. They are steam-sterilized after use. Disposable mirrors are also available, and they cost about 16 cents each."

A board member of Oral Health Kansas and other agencies related to dental health, Minnis said he has spent the last three years working on a statewide screening program for students that will bring schools in compliance with a mandatory school dental screening law.

He is also a CHC/SEK board member. "I do want to make very clear that I am speaking as a concerned individual, not as any kind of spokesman for CHC/SEK," Minnis said.

He said he believes that PHS principal Mike Philpot turned down CHC/SEK's offer of a free screening, and brought in Herron from Columbus, for personal reasons.

"Philpot and I do have bad blood, but that's not what this is about," Minnis said. "I believe he's not looking out for the welfare of the kids. I know I've stirred up a hornet's nest, but I have a way of doing that when it's an issue I care so much about."

Repeated attempts over the weekend to contact Herron and Philpot for comment were unsuccessful.

Gary Price, USD 250 superintendent of schools, said he had been informed by CHC/SEK that PHS had not scheduled a screening.