



Cyber criminals and dentistry

Gone are the days when someone walks into a bank with a balaclava and a gun shouting "stick 'em up!" Fraud is less hazardous for criminals, especially since they can hide behind a false identity in a phone call or email. According to specialist dental accountant Heidi Marshall, a partner in Dodd and Co, cyber criminals steal approximately £9.2* billion every year out of the UK economy and dentists are among their many targets.

Fraudsters have different strategies:

Phishing - this is when someone sends you an email, purporting to be from someone you know, trying to get access to secure information. Most of us can identify and delete the terribly worded phishing e-mails from 'friends' who are stuck in a remote place and need you to send them some money.

Vishing - this is the phone call version when someone rings with a very well rehearsed and plausible story requiring you to make a payment. They even give you a case reference (it must be true then!).

Only recently, said Heidi, one of her dental clients had a call from the "corporation tax people" asking for a payment over the phone of £3,000 or they would send in the bailiffs. "Thankfully, our client refused and not surprisingly they never heard from the so-called tax people again."

"Another dental client received a letter recently demanding money to "pay for the publication of your company". As he had recently incorporated he assumed this was genuine, went online and made the payment. When he sent us a copy of the letter we have to agree that it did look real but unfortunately for this particular client it cost him £190 - for absolutely nothing."

Heidi said: "If you are in any doubt about a request for money, DON'T PAY IT, and if you'd like clarification, give us a call, we'll be really happy to delete or recycle it for you!"

"My advice on protecting yourself from cyber fraud," Heidi continued, "is to be vigilant, use strong passwords and, if you must write them down, DON'T save them in a document on your computer. If someone hacks your computer they will also have access to all your passwords."

"Look after your security settings and have anti virus software installed. Don't forget this is just as important on your home computer/laptop. Particularly if you are using Internet banking."

Remember, your bank WILL NEVER:

- 1) ask you for your card PIN number
- 2) ask you for your security code from your hand held security device
- 3) send a policeman to your house to pick up your bank card/money etc

(*Source: 2013 National Fraud Authority)

Note to editors

- NASDAL, the National Association of Specialist Dental Accountants and Lawyers, was set up in 1998. It is an association of accountants and lawyers who specialise in acting for and looking after the accounting, tax and legal affairs of dentists. It is the pre-eminent centre of excellence for accounting, tax and legal matters concerning dentists. Its members are required to pass strict admission criteria, and it regulates the performance of its members to ensure high standards of technical knowledge and service.
- For further information please contact Caroline Holland on 0208 679 9595/07974 731396 or email caroline@carolineholland.eu.