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Editorial

Oral Health and Body Connection: Our Responsibilities as Health Care Professionals

Editorial

Oral health has long been considered to be a separate specialty that is distinct from whole body health. However, poor oral health can promote systemic disease, and is found concomitantly with numerous systemic disease processes. Thus, individuals with poor oral health may have a predisposition to other disease processes. A healthy mouth contains hundreds of billions of bacteria, and this number increases more than ten times if the mouth is not adequately cleaned. Periodontitis is a chronic inflammatory oral condition currently affecting more than 75 percent of the U.S. adult population.

Many research manuscripts have been written on the harmful effects of perio-pathogens and their inflammatory mediators that enter the circulatory system. Periodontitis has been shown to predispose people to diabetes, insulin resistance, respiratory diseases, obesity, osteoporosis, metabolic syndrome X, rheumatoid arthritis, and pregnancy complications. Links have also been demonstrated between periodontitis and cardiovascular diseases that include atherosclerosis, heart attack, congestive heart failure, and coronary artery disease. There is also a relationship between periodontitis and increased fat levels in the blood.

One of the hardest things that we try to do as health care professionals is to instill in our patients the importance of caring for their teeth and gums. Patients seem to be much more interested in not having tooth pain and being able to eat comfortably. Others

are more concerned with cosmetics, and having straight and white shiny teeth. Vanity for these people is of utmost importance and their dental and systemic health take a back seat. Patients arrive in our offices with severely decayed teeth and moderate to and severe gingivitis and periodontitis. They want their teeth fixed and we try to oblige because during these hard times we don't want to lose patients. We are letting our patients dictate their care, and have been justifying doing restorative work without optimal periodontal health because of the bottom line, money and fear of losing patients

There has been renewed interest by the scientific community on the relationship between oral infectious diseases and systemic health. The public is becoming more aware of this interaction and also how proper nutrition can modify these relationships in a positive manner. Nutrition influences the immune response and aids in the integrity of the oral hard and soft tissues. Thus, nutritional deficiencies may increase the incidence of periodontitis. Nutrition has also been found to modify the incidence of several diseases in patients with periodontitis.

The Journal of Dental Problems and Solutions as an open access is a forum where clinician and researchers can find the most recent advances in all areas where problems in dentistry exist and here we can find their solutions. There needs to be more collaboration amongst health care professionals, both clinicians and researchers, and the implementation of translational sciences where researchers and clinicians have a forum to communicate with each other. The Journal of Dental Problems and Solutions is where this can occur.

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