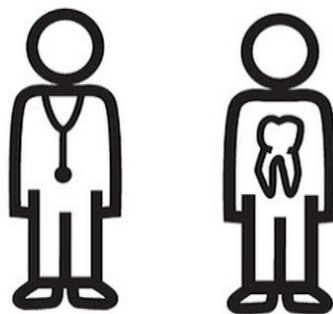


# The Oral-Systemic Connection:

Integrating Oral Health and Medical Care  
In the Community Health Center Setting



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“Doc, if I could just get these bad teeth out of my head, I know I would feel better.”

# What is the Oral-Systemic Connection and why is it important?

- Oral health and overall health are intimately related/connected
- Our nation is faced with a growing problem of medical and dental healthcare disparities
- 2000 Surgeon General's report: *Oral Health in America*
  - Informative report detailing the burden of oral disease on our country, the important message that oral health is essential to overall health, and the need for a national oral health plan to eliminate oral health disparities.
  - No less than a “silent epidemic of oral diseases is affecting our most vulnerable citizens—poor children, the elderly, and many members of racial and ethnic minority groups.”
- 2010 Surgeon General's report: *National Call to Action To Promote Oral Health*
  - Truly a *call to action*—“...an invitation to expand plans, activities, and programs designed to promote oral health and prevent disease, especially to reduce the health disparities...” that affect certain groups of our society.
- Oral Health Provisions in the “Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act” signed into law by President Obama on March 23, 2010



# What is the Oral-Systemic Connection and why is it important?

- General health risk factors also affect oral and craniofacial health (ex. tobacco use, poor diet)
- The mouth and face can serve as a mirror of health and disease (ex. HIV infection)
- The mouth can serve as a portal for infection (ex. endocarditis)
  - Several studies have shown that oral flora/infections are associated with higher morbidity and mortality, esp in certain patient populations (ex. neutropenic chemo pts, transplant patients)
  - Oral bacteria have potential for causing respiratory infections (ex. COPD pts, bacterial pneumonia)



# What is the Oral-Systemic Connection and why is it important?

- Oral transmission of infections (ex. STDs)
- Periodontal disease—Diabetes connection
  - having diabetes increases incidence and progression of periodontal disease
  - Periodontal disease can affect glucose control in diabetic patients
- Oral infection—Cardiovascular disease (heart disease/stroke) connection
- Periodontal disease—Adverse pregnancy outcomes connection (ex. preterm labor, preterm rupture of membranes)
- Poor oral health has effects on quality of life and general well-being

# The Oral-Systemic Connection

## A Physician's Perspective

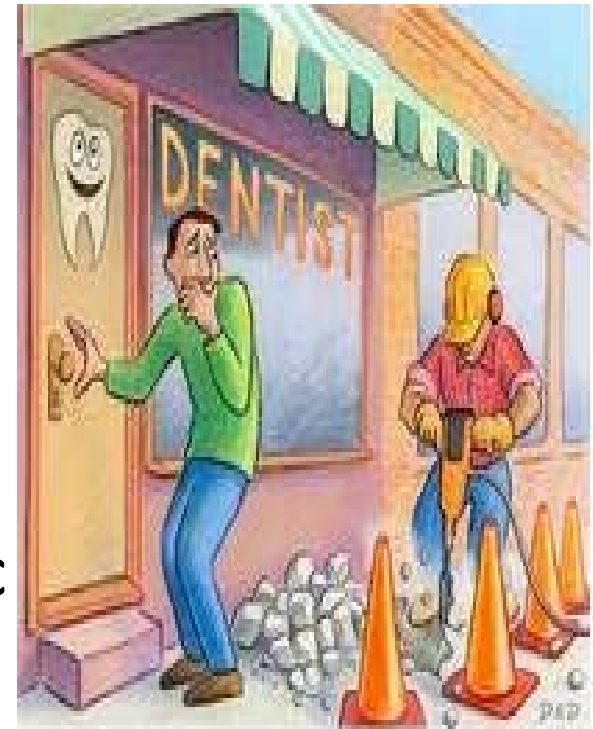
- “Not my territory.” (Many medical doctors think the area between the lips and the tonsils is off limits)
- Lack of oral health education in medical school curriculum and physician residency training
  - AAMC Report IX: *Contemporary Issues in Medicine: Oral Health Education for Medical and Dental Students, 2008*
    - “Identify learning objectives in oral and systemic health that will enhance each profession’s capacity to improve and maintain the oral and overall health of individuals and populations.”
    - The knowledge dentists need related to clinical medicine and the knowledge physicians need related to clinical dentistry are overlapping more and more



# The Oral-Systemic Connection

## What Makes the Community Health Center Special

- Affordable=Access
- Dispel fear of the dentist
- Ease of referral
- Consultation between medical and dental providers
- The patient-centered **medical-home AND dental-home**=Holistic approach to patient care
- Education/training site for future doctors/dentists



# The Oral-Systemic Connection

## Special Populations: The Medical Provider's Role

- **INFANTS & CHILDREN**

- **EDUCATE**

- Incorporate oral health history into every well child examination
- Fluoride, Fluoride, Fluoride!!!
- Nutritional counseling and other anticipatory guidance
- Dispel fear of the dentist

- **ASSESS**

- Incorporate oral health examination into every well child examination
- Oral/dental trauma

- **ACCESS**

- Referral to a dental professional
- First dental visit by age 12 months (in high-risk populations)





# The Oral-Systemic Connection

## Special Populations: The Medical Provider's Role

- **INFANTS & CHILDREN**



### COMPONENTS OF ORAL HEALTH SUPERVISION

Optimal oral health supervision for infants, children, and adolescents should contain the following components:

Components of Oral Health Supervision	Provided by Oral Health Professionals	Provided by Other Health Professionals
Family preparation	✓	✓
Interview questions	✓	✓
Risk assessment	✓	✓
Screening, including recognizing and reporting of suspected child abuse/neglect	✓	✓
Examination, including periodontal assessment and treatment for oral disease and injury	✓	
Preventive procedures (application of dental sealants or topical fluoride varnishes, gels, or foams) as approved by state practice acts or regulations	✓	✓
Anticipatory guidance	✓	✓
Measurable outcomes	✓	✓
Referrals, as needed	✓	✓

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*Bright Futures in Practice: Oral Health—Pocket Guide* © 2004 by National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center, Georgetown University.

# The Oral-Systemic Connection

## Special Populations: The Medical Provider's Role

- **PREGNANT WOMEN**
  - **EDUCATE**
    - Dispel fear: “It’s okay to see the dentist when you’re pregnant.”
    - Fluoride use (water, toothpaste)
    - Oral hygiene
    - Nutrition
    - Changes in teeth/gums
    - Link b/w poor oral health and adverse pregnancy outcomes
  - **ASSESS** oral health status
  - **ACCESS**
    - Referral to a dental professional



# The Oral-Systemic Connection

## Special Populations: The Medical Provider's Role

- **ADULTS (including the elderly)**
  - **EDUCATE**
    - Oral hygiene (never too old to be reminded)
    - Link b/w poor oral health and systemic disease
    - Nutrition and it's effect on oral health
    - Tobacco and it's effect on oral health
    - Dispel fear of the dentist
  - **ASSESS** oral health status
    - Oral cancer screening
    - Recognizing dental caries
    - Recognizing periodontal disease
  - **ACCESS**
    - Referral to a dental professional
    - Encourage regular dental check-ups



# The Oral-Systemic Connection

## Case 1



2 ½ year old female presents with her father for evaluation of cold symptoms.

# The Oral-Systemic Connection

## Case 2



40 year old male asking about a painless nodule on his lower lip.

# The Oral-Systemic Connection

## Case 3



76 year old female presents with hemoptysis (coughing-up blood).

# The Oral-Systemic Connection

## Case 4



19 month old male brought in by his worried mother concerning ? low attachment of his upper lip frenulum.

# The Oral-Systemic Connection

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