

The BDJ News section accepts items that include general news, latest research and diary events that interest our readers. Press releases or articles may be edited, and should include a colour photograph if possible.

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NEW GUIDELINES BRING INTERNATIONAL FOCUS ON DIABETES

New clinical guidelines have been released by the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) to emphasise the importance of periodontal health for people with diabetes. The *Guideline on oral health for people with diabetes* supports what research has already suggested, in that management of periodontal disease can help reduce the risk of developing diabetes and can also help people with diabetes control their blood sugar levels.

The IDF is an organisation of 200 national diabetes associations from 160 countries. Its new guidelines con-

tain clinical recommendations on periodontal care, written in collaboration with the World Dental Federation (FDI), that encourage health professionals to conduct annual inquiries for symptoms of periodontal disease such as swollen or red gums or bleeding during tooth brushing and to educate their patients with diabetes about the implications of the condition on oral health, and especially periodontal health.

Samuel Low, Associate Dean and Professor of Periodontology at the University of Florida College of Dentistry and President of the American Academy of

Periodontology (AAP), said 'Periodontal disease triggers the body's inflammatory response which can affect insulin sensitivity and ultimately lead to unhealthy blood sugar levels. Establishing routine periodontal care is one way to help keep diabetes under control.'

In addition to helping increase awareness about the importance of oral care for people with diabetes, Dr Low believes the guideline presents more opportunities for medicine and dentistry to work together.

Diabetes affects approximately 246 million people worldwide, and this number is expected to increase. For more information on the guideline, visit www.idf.org.

DENTISTS CAN HELP PREVENT FATAL HEART ATTACKS

Dentists can play a potentially life-saving role in healthcare by identifying patients at risk of fatal heart attacks and referring them to physicians for further evaluation, according to a Swedish study.

Published in the November issue of the *Journal of the American Dental Association*, the study followed 200 patients (101 women and 99 men) in private dental practices in Sweden whose dentists used a computerised system, 'HeartScore', to calculate the risk of a patient dying from a cardiovascular event within a ten-year period.

Designed by the European Society of Cardiology, HeartScore measures cardiovascular disease risk in persons aged 40-65 by factoring the person's age, sex, total cholesterol level, systolic blood pressure and smoking status. A HeartScore was produced for each patient in the study and patients with a HeartScore of 10% or higher were recommended to

seek medical advice.

Twelve patients in the study, all of them men, had HeartScores of 10% or higher. All women participating in the study had HeartScores of 5% or less. Of the 12 male patients with HeartScores of 10% or higher, nine sought further evaluation by a medical care provider who decided that intervention was indicated for six of the patients. Two patients did not follow the dentist's recommendation to seek further medical evaluation and one patient was only encouraged by his dentist to discontinue smoking. Physicians for three patients were not able to confirm their risk for cardiovascular disease.

The study's authors conclude that oral healthcare professionals can use the system to identify patients who are unaware of their risk of developing serious complications as a result of cardiovascular disease and who are in need of medical interventions. They commented, 'With



emerging data suggesting an association between oral and non-oral diseases, and with the possibility of performing chairside screening tests for diseases such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes, oral healthcare professionals may find themselves in an opportune position to enhance the overall health and well-being of their patients.'