

DENTAL WELLNESS* NEWSLETTER

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This is the fourth issue of our newsletter. We are excited to be receiving great feedback from our past issues, along with requests for information regarding various dental topics, some of which is included in this issue, and also will be in up and coming issues. This reinforces my belief that education is where it's at!

Getting To The Heart Of Dental Disease

Spring 04

Before the discovery of penicillin, Rheumatic Fever was quite often a fatal disease. Those who contracted it and survived most often were left with a valvular heart defect that was caused by bacteria in the blood stream (bacteremia), which colonized on the heart valves causing the damage.

During this pre-penicillin era, Dr. Charles Bass* was the dean of Tulane University Medical School. Knowing the role of bacteria in this disease, he was at a loss to know how bacteria were introduced into the blood stream, as upon inspection of those children who had succumbed to the disease, he noted no cuts or bruises anywhere on their skin. Upon further inspection, he made an amazing discovery. Each victim had inflamed gums. He saw that there was no skin lining in the inner crevice between the gums and teeth.

This discovery led him to conspire with Dr. Sumpter Arnum, then dean of the University of Texas Dental School, to learn as much as he could about the "habits" of oral bacteria. Together, they discovered that colonies of bacteria (plaque) "glue" onto the teeth and eventually grow into the crevices between the gums and teeth. Their waste products erode the epithelium (skin) lining next to the teeth. The bacteria then have an entry point into the blood stream. They also found out that if the bacterial colonies are broken up and removed from these areas, the gum lining grows back. They also discovered that after the colonies' removal, they began to re-appear in approximately 24 hours.

The "Bass" technic of introducing the toothbrush bristles into the crevice (sulcus) around the teeth is to this day taught to dental patients by dentists and dental hygienists. It is interesting to realize how one person's searching for an answer for a serious problem led him to discover a relatively simple preventive measure which is used routinely today.

It is also routine that those who have valvular heart defects are premedicated with antibiotics prior to any dental procedures which might introduce bacteria into the blood stream, such as a dental prophylaxis (cleaning).

Further research since Dr. Bass' discoveries has shown

how bacteria nest with sticky cholesterol lipids on the artery walls and heart valves. Sometimes these plaque deposits can become dislodged and move through the arteries which can lead to a blockage. If this happens in the brain, a stroke occurs. Also, ongoing research indicates that bacteremia can also complicate diabetes - and that pregnant women with periodontal disease and bacteremia may be at risk in having premature or low birth weight babies.

Based on this knowledge, we at the Dental Wellness Center take gum disease seriously and help people get healthy with the latest in diagnostic equipment such as microscopes, and treatment that is individually prescribed, monitored and modulated. The main reason people get healthy at the Dental Wellness Center, is the time taken and passion of the people who work here. They form relationships. They extend information about individualized problems and how to handle them so that they can become participants in their own health. This gives them more confidence about their oral health state than ever before.

* Charles C. Bass, M.D. *American Heart Journal, St. Louis, Vol.69, pages 718-719, May 1965*

Excerpts from journal article:

"In almost all ailments of the heart caused by bacteria, the source of infection is known to be the pathologic and infected environment of the teeth.

..the health, welfare &, even life itself, of persons who have heart conditions which predispose to infection may depend on prevention & control of dental disease.

..bacteria in periodontal pockets and diseased periodontal tissues are the source of almost all bacteremia-from the environment of the teeth.

..I believe that some time in the future, leading cardiologists will wonder, in retrospect, how information so needed by their patients could

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Quote of the month

"Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us or we find it not."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

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* Wellness denotes health, and true health is based upon sound relationships bounded by mutual trust and respect between practitioner, staff and patient. It is an attitude that involves learning and development of common goals for prevention and treatment.

Your Teeth On TV, Up Close And Personal

New video technology enhances our wellness-centered practice, as it can increase our patients' awareness of their oral condition. Video cameras are capable of traveling to almost all areas of our bodies – i.e. Katie Couric, Today Show host, increased public awareness when she did a special segment on the importance of early detection of colon cancer by having a televised colonoscopy. We have been using intra-oral cameras in our office for more than 15 years, as it has become as integral a part of a dentist's equipment as a drill. If you are already a patient of ours, you've probably been amazed to see your teeth up close and personal on a TV monitor taken by a video camera capable of taking moving, as well as still images of all

areas of your mouth. The videocam is not just to help you see the interior of you mouth - it also helps Dr. McBride do an even better job of checking your teeth and surrounding areas. It can magnify the inside of the mouth more than 40 times, and from angles we could only previously dream of. At last our patients can see what we are talking about as we examine their teeth and mouth. We no longer have to rely on a tiny mirror to attempt to show an interested patient a small crack in a tooth or a suspicious looking area on the back of the tongue or cheek. Not only can we teach you about your own mouth using this, but it actually helps Dr. McBride see any problems sooner. That's what a dental check-up is all about-finding problems when they're small!

Porcelain Veneers

The modern miracle of adhesive dentistry allows for amazing esthetic changes that not too many years ago would be considered impossible. Thin, custom-made porcelain wafers are placed over the fronts of the teeth to enhance their appearance & repair damage. They can be used to improve a wide variety of cosmetic dental problems.

In addition to whitening stained or discolored teeth, they can close gaps between them, many times "correct" a crooked smile without a need for braces, repair chips and imperfections, and create a more attractive, youthful looking smile.

The procedure usually involves removing a small amount of the outermost layer of the tooth called the enamel. Molds (impressions) of the mouth are taken & temporary veneers are made to simulate the finished result.

These can be modified to the mutual satisfaction of the patient and dentist to act as a guide for the finished veneers

A high-quality laboratory technician can fabricate veneers that look every bit as life-like as natural teeth. The dentist then bonds the veneers onto the fronts of the teeth, improving both their appearance and strength. The procedure takes about two weeks from start to finish. Although there are several methods of preparing the teeth for veneers, I prefer the technique that involves wrapping the porcelain around the biting edges and sides of the tooth. This can strengthen the bond to the tooth, increase its protection and also make it less likely to stain the area between the tooth and veneer.

Though porcelain veneers cost more than other cosmetic dental options, they also last longer and have the most natural appearance. People who want permanently whitened

More on Soda

My article in the Winter Newsletter discussed the dental dangers of soda consumption. It is appealing because the caffeine, sugar and acid contained within it gives one a sort of "high" and it can become somewhat addictive, no matter what the TV ads say. The American Dental Association suggests the following to help cut down on soda consumption: 1: Make sure water is readily available

and encourage students to drink water instead of soda. 2: Ensure that school food and vending services offer nutritious selections.

School officials with-input from patients, caregivers and school health and nutrition consultants-have the flexibility to decide what is sold, where it is sold and when it is made available to students.

Staff News

Exciting news for our bookkeeper, Jean Zirkle! Having completed treatment to align her jaw joints, she is now ready for the orthodontic phase of her dental health plan.

She will have a complete change in her lower face due to correction of a severe overbite and rearrangement of her teeth for a more awesome smile. Congratulations Jean!

Please let us know what topics you would like to hear about in upcoming issues.